NATION

CBSE OSM trouble: Students claim answer sheet mismatch

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BUSINESS

FM flags '3F' challenges: Fuel, Fertiliser, Forex

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SPORTS

RCB's batting depth vs GT's relentless bowling machine

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Fuel prices hiked for 4th time in 11 days

Middle class to suffer the most as petrol tops Rs 100 across cities, diesel nears Rs 100

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked on Monday for the fourth time in 11 days, pushing petrol prices above Rs 100 per litre across most major cities and deepening concerns over the impact on middle-class households already grappling with rising living costs.

Petrol prices were increased by Rs 2.61 per litre and diesel by Rs 2.71, taking the cumulative hike since May 15 to nearly Rs 7.5 per litre. In Delhi, petrol now costs Rs 102.12 per litre, while diesel has risen to Rs 95.20 per litre.

The first round of hikes on 15 May came shortly after BJP secured victories in three of five state and Union Territory elections, including West Bengal.

Following Monday's revision, petrol prices climbed to Rs 111.21 per litre in Mumbai, Rs 113.51 in Kolkata and Rs 107.77 in Chennai. Diesel prices in the three metros rose to Rs 97.83, Rs 99.82 and Rs 99.55 per litre respectively.

The repeated hikes are expected to hit middle-class families hardest, as rising fuel costs are likely to push up transportation fares, food prices, delivery charges and household expenses.

The increase also comes at a time when domestic LPG cylinder prices have risen by Rs 60 since mid-May, while CNG prices have gone up by Rs 4 per kg, adding further pressure on household budgets.

The hikes were triggered by prolonged volatility in global crude oil markets following the Iran conflict and disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, a key oil shipping route.

Petroleum Ministry Joint Secretary Sujata Sharma said losses had narrowed to around Rs 600 crore per day from Rs 1,000 crore before 15 May. However, she did not explain why LPG losses, which are supposed to be compensated through government subsidies, were being included in calculations used to justify fuel price hikes.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused the government of increasing prices in phases after elections ended. "Petrol and diesel prices are being increased in instalments so that people's pockets are quietly picked," he said. —*PTI*

Motorists queue up to refuel their two-wheelers at a petrol bunk in Chennai —*PTI*

India reports no Ebola cases so far, govt says no panic

NEW DELHI/ GANDHINAGAR, 25 MAY

The government confirmed no Ebola cases have been reported in India, with Union Health Minister JP Nadda reviewing preparedness measures. Nadda instructed all entry points to ensure vigilant screening, and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) to remain ready for testing and surveillance. Meanwhile, Gujarat has intensified screening at Ahmedabad Airport for passengers from Uganda, Congo, and South Sudan, with no cases reported. State health minister Praful Panseriya assured, "There is not a single case of Ebola in Gujarat or India; there is no need to panic," and additional beds and isolation wards have been set up as a precaution. —*PTI*

>>>MORE ON PAGE 6

Three AIADMK rebel MLAs resign, set to join TVK

CHENNAI, 25 MAY

AIADMK suffered another blow on Monday when three of its party legislators belonging to the rebel group led by senior leaders C Ve Shanmugam and SP Velumani resigned and are set to join the ruling TVK, prompting "horse-trading" charges from the opposition DMK and AIADMK. AIADMK Chief Edappadi K Palaniswami lashed out at the "fraud jobs" of the TVK government and said such things were new to Tamil Nadu politics. He called the resignation episode a "pre-planned conspiracy." The development comes weeks after the AIADMK lost the April 23 polls, the fourth major drubbing since 2019, its MLAs split into two groups, each supporting party general secretary Palaniswami and the Shanmugam-Velumani duo. The two camps took divergent positions on the TVK government's floor test, with the Palaniswami faction voting against it and the 25-member group on the other side backing the Vijay-led government. —*PTI*

>>MORE ON PAGE 3

FM hits out at critics for peddling pessimism

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday criticised "naysayers" who claim India's economy is "crumbling" amid Iran war.

She said a cynical and pessimistic narrative was being created, with critics forgetting the "good being done by common people", especially after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's austerity appeals. She warned that India cannot afford fear-mongering and stressed the need to instil confidence through words and actions.

'Govt lost Rs 1 lakh cr'

On fuel pricing, Sitharaman said the government had foregone over Rs 1 lakh crore annually through excise duty cuts on petrol and diesel to shield consumers from inflation triggered by the West Asia conflict. She defended price hikes, saying earlier steps prevented Rs 10 increase at a time.

"The increases now are coming from oil marketing companies (OMCs) because they are the ones procuring (raw material crude oil) and selling (finished product - fuel)," Sitharaman said on the sidelines of the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council export awards event. When asked if the RBI's dividend of Rs 2.87 lakh crore aligned with the government's expectations, especially given the current need for support, the minister stated that the calculations follow a clear formulation. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

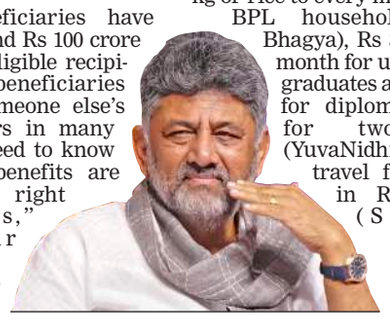
K'taka govt to review guarantees' beneficiaries

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said on Monday that the government is considering reviewing its list of beneficiaries for the guarantee schemes by asking them to resubmit their documents, as crores are being diverted to ineligible recipients.

He was responding to a question about plans to review the guarantee schemes as ineligible people are receiving benefits.

"Many beneficiaries have died, and around Rs 100 crore is going to ineligible recipients. Also, beneficiaries have given someone else's phone numbers in many cases, so we need to know whether the benefits are reaching the right beneficiaries," Shivakumar said.



Speaking to reporters, he said, "There are suggestions ask the beneficiaries to once again submit their documents. We are reviewing at every taluk and gathering information."

In 2026-27, the government has allocated Rs 51,286 crore for the five schemes.

The Congress government's five guarantee schemes are, 200 units of free power to all households (Gruha Jyoti), Rs 2,000 monthly assistance to the woman head of every family (Gruha Lakshmi), additional 5 kg of rice to every member of a BPL household (Anna Bhagya), Rs 3,000 every month for unemployed graduates and Rs 1,500 for diploma holders for two years (YuvaNidhi), and free travel for women in RTC buses (Shakti). —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

BUSY DAY AT COURT

NTA learnt no lessons from NEET leak: SC

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

It's sad that the NTA has not learnt lessons from the earlier NEET paper leak, the Supreme Court said on Monday as it sought the response of the Centre, the NTA and the CBI on pleas for replacing the testing agency with a robust, autonomous body to conduct medical entrance exams.

Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe directed that a copy of the petitions be served to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and asked the NTA to file an affidavit by Thursday regarding compliance of directions issued by the court in 2024.

"The matter came to this court earlier also. There was a monitoring committee which made some recommendations, and they were accepted. We want the NTA to file an affidavit on the steps taken for implementing the recommendations of the committee," the bench said.

The SC, which issued a notice on a plea filed by the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), through lawyer Tanvi Dubey, said it is tagging all matters together.

It directed the committee headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan for overhauling the NTA to detail the steps taken to comply with its directions.

All parties were directed to file their responses within three days by the court, which listed the matter for hearing on Friday. —*PTI*

>>>More on Pg 4

'Girls must not drop out over lack of toilets, pads'

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Supreme Court on Monday stressed that girls should not give up education just because sanitary napkins and functional, gender-segregated toilets are not available at schools and asked the Centre to ensure that its directions regarding this are complied with.

The SC's observation came after the Centre said its 30 January judgement directing authorities to provide free sanitary napkins to girls and functional, gender-segregated toilets at schools has led to galvanisation of efforts in all states and UTs.

"Now, it is for you to make the most of it and see that as far as possible, the benefits are extended in terms of our judgment," the bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan told Additional Solicitor General Archana Pathak Dave, who was appearing for the Centre.

In the landmark judgment delivered on 30 January to ensure gender justice and educational equity, the SC had directed all states and UTs to provide free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins to girl students and functional, gender-segregated toilets for all students at schools. It had issued a slew of directions to all states and UTs to ensure that these facilities were provided in schools irrespective of whether they were government-run, aided or private. —*PTI*

Indore protests water crisis, cops show water canons

INDORE, 25 MAY

India's cleanest city Indore is parched. Desperate residents took to the streets to protest the water crisis even as mercury hit 41°C on Monday. The protests, which have been ongoing for days now, even saw a Congress councillor prostrate before police officials pleading for water. The protests witnessed peak irony when police brought water canons to disperse the protesters.

Sunday saw residents block many roads to protests against the municipal corporation. They say taps as well as borewells have run dry, even as the government boasts about making Indore a "Water Plus City" under Swachh Survekshan 2021. This prestigious certification is awarded by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to cities that successfully treat and reuse all wastewater before releasing it into the environment.

A viral video shows Congress Councilor for Ward 75, Raju Bhadoria, fall at the feet of officials and plead: "Sir, give us water, else people will die." Angry residents sang "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram" while carrying empty vessels to protest. —*PTI*

Dad kills baby over cost of raising 2nd girl child in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

A 25-year-old man allegedly killed his 10-month-old daughter in Delhi's Bhalswa Dairy area, police said on Monday, citing financial distress as the motive. The accused, identified as Deepak, allegedly strangled the infant, dumped her body in a septic tank, and later fabricated a kidnapping story to mislead investigators.

According to police, Deepak drugged his wife and elder daughter on Saturday night by lacing their food or drink with an intoxicating substance before committing the crime. He later claimed the child had been kidnapped when he stepped out to buy milk and biscuits on Sunday morning. However, CCTV footage failed to support his account, and he eventually confessed during interrogation, leading to the recovery of the body.

Separately, reports note that raising a child in India involves significant financial planning, with average monthly costs estimated at around Rs 18,000, totalling Rs 7–8 lakh in the first five years. Expenses include food, infant formula, cereals, diapers, and hygiene essentials. Diapers alone may cost Rs 2,000–Rs 5,000 per month, while milk, formula, and baby care products add further recurring costs. —*PTI*

JOY RIDE GONE WRONG

Around 300 tourists were left stranded mid-air in 65 cabins after a technical malfunction hit the Gulmarg cable car system in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. The 179 tourists were evacuated in a seven-hour-long operation. Some cabins were reportedly hanging nearly 500ft above ground, making evacuation difficult. Heavy rainfall further hampered rescue efforts. No casualties were reported —*PTI*

CM reallocates Planning & Statistics portfolio

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday carried out a minor Cabinet reshuffle, assigning the Planning and Statistics department to Minister K Venkatesh.

Venkatesh, who currently handles the Animal Husbandry and Sericulture portfolios, has been given additional charge of the department with immediate effect, according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Affairs and Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DPAR) Secretariat

Siddaramaiah will continue to retain key portfolios, including Finance, Cabinet Affairs, DPAR, Intelligence, Information, Youth Services, Sports, ST Welfare and Co-operation, besides all unallocated departments. —*ANI*

A MOMENT OF PRIDE

Prez confers 66 Padma Awards; Dharmendra, N Rajam honoured

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

President Droupadi Murmu conferred the Padma Vibhushan on actor Dharmendra posthumously and classical musician N Rajam at a Civil Investiture Ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here on Monday.

As the name of Dharmendra's wife Hema Malini, a BJP MP, was announced for his exceptional service in the field of art, their daughter Ahana Deol, sitting in the audience, broke down in tears.

Rajam was honoured for her work in Indian classical music, especially for revolutionising violin via 'Gayaki Ang' style that replicates vocal music on the instrument.

Murmu conferred the Padma Bhushan on Bhagat Singh Koshyari, former Uttarakhand CM; Shatavadhani R Ganesh, acclaimed polymath who revived the classical Indian art form 'Avadhana'; Uday Suresh Kumar Kotak, founder of Kotak Mahindra Bank; and gastroenterologist Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy.

Prez Murmu posthumously conferred the Padma Vibhushan on actor Dharmendra, received by MP Hema Malini on Monday —*PTI*

She also gave the award posthumously on ad guru Piyush Pandey and former parliamentarian Vijay Kumar Malhotra. Pandey's wife and Malhotra's son received the awards.

For 2026, the President has approved conferment of 131 Padma Awards, five Padma Vibhushan, 13 Padma Bhushan and 113 Padma Shri.

At Monday' event, she conferred two Padma Vibhushan, six Padma Bhushan and 58 Padma Shri. The remaining awardees will be conferred in the second round of the ceremony later, sources said.

Indian women's cricket captain Harmanpreet Kaur Bhullar, actor Prosenjit Chatterjee, para athlete Praveen Kumar and former CRPF director general K Vijay Kumar received the Padma Shri. — *PTI*

Ranveer Singh banned by film body over 'Don 3' exit

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

The Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) on Monday said its over four lakh members would not work with **Ranveer Singh** following his last-minute exit from Farhan Akhtar's 'Don 3' which has been in production for three years.

Akhtar and his partner Ritesh Sidhwani had filed a complaint against Singh before the Indian Film & Television Directors' Association (IFTDA), which then referred the matter to FWICE.

'Don 3' was yet to begin shooting. The producers claim that more than Rs 45 crore had already been spent in the pre-production phase.

"We wrote a letter to you but there was no reply so no member from FWICE will work with you," FWICE honorary general secretary Ashok Dubey said.

Ashoke Pandit, chief advisor to FWICE said Singh withdrew from the film three weeks before shooting was scheduled to begin. —*PTI*

Leadership change soon? Cong bosses call CM to Delhi

Don't know what the subject is, says CM; Talks on RS polls likely

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Amid speculation over leadership change and a possible Cabinet reshuffle in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Monday confirmed that the Congress High Command has invited him to Delhi for a meeting on 26 May.

"I don't know the subject. But I'm invited. Tomorrow there is a meeting at 11am. Last night, KC Venugopal called and informed me about the date and meeting," Siddaramaiah told reporters, adding that he was unaware of the agenda. He said discussions around leadership change were "always there."

The development comes as the state Congress completes three years in office, with increasing speculation over a leadership tussle between Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. Party sources said the Delhi meeting may also include discussions on Rajya Sabha elections and electoral roll revisions.

Shivakumar, responding to queries, said he would attend any meeting if called by the high command, adding, "If I'm called, I will go." He, however, declined to comment on the leadership issue, saying it was "not my job," and maintained that party decisions would be final.

He also asserted confidence in the Congress retaining power in 2028, countering BJP remarks, and reiterated that governance and organisational matters were for the party leadership to decide.

Party insiders said some MLAs are pushing for a Cabinet reshuffle, while others want clarity on leadership first. Three ministerial posts remain vacant following resignations and a death, further intensifying internal discussions.

Meanwhile, former Karnataka chief minister DV Sadananda Gowda said he is in the race for a Rajya Sabha seat and is ready to take up responsibilities if the party leadership decides. He also criticised Congress over voter list revision issues and expressed confidence in BJP's prospects in future elections. *—PTI*

Cong says BJP looted ₹57 lakh crore in the name of fuel hike

Congress accused the Narendra Modi-led BJP government of "fuel loot" and demanded a rollback of recent price hikes. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, his Deputy DK Shivakumar, and Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala, alleged that repeated increases in petrol, diesel, LPG, and CNG prices over the last 11 days have severely burdened households, farmers, and small businesses.

CONG ALLEGES:

₹43 lakh crore

was collected by the Centre through excise & customs duty on petrol and diesel since 2014. Congress claims this burden was directly passed on to ordinary people through high fuel prices.

EMERGENCY FUNDS USED?

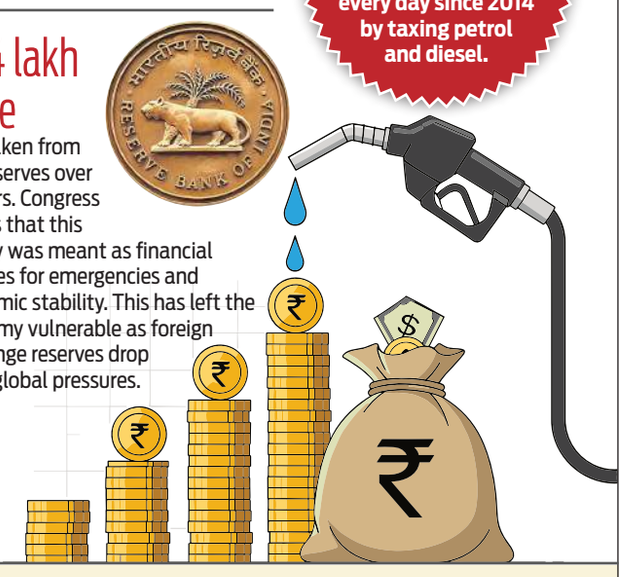
₹2.87 lakh crore

was collected by the Centre from the RBI on 23 May by "making it sell precious Foreign Exchange Reserves" even as rupee nosedived against the dollar.

Modi govt collected ₹1,000 crore every day since 2014 by taxing petrol and diesel.

₹14 lakh crore

was taken from RBI reserves over 12 years. Congress argues that this money was meant as financial reserves for emergencies and economic stability. This has left the economy vulnerable as foreign exchange reserves drop amid global pressures.

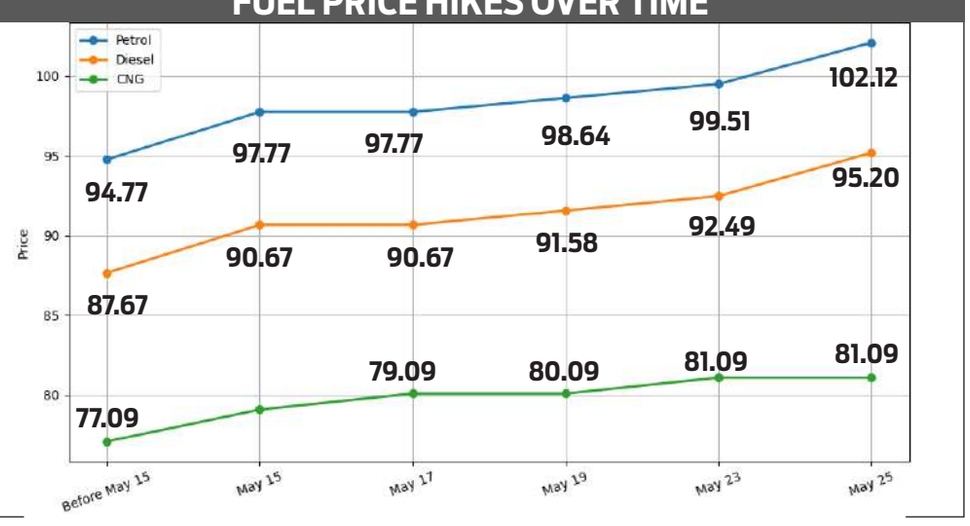


THE RATES ARE:

BENGALURU PRICES AS OF 25 MAY

Petrol	Diesel	CNG
₹110.93/ litre	₹98.89/ litre	₹90.10/ kg

FUEL PRICE HIKES OVER TIME



Bhatkal remains peaceful as police deployment continues

KARWAR, 25 MAY

The situation in Bhatkal town of Uttara Kannada district remained peaceful on Monday, a day after tensions erupted over a dispute concerning a "Moori Katte" — a religious platform — at Jagate Katte. Heavy police presence has been established and prohibitory orders imposed as a precautionary measure, officials said.

The structure, removed earlier during National Highway widening works, had recently been reconstructed on land belonging to the National Highways Authority. This triggered strong opposition from members of a minority community, who demanded its removal.

According to police, a group of people gathered at the spot and attempted to demolish the reconstructed platform. During the ensuing commotion, a few people allegedly assaulted deployed police personnel. Four cases have been registered in connection with the incident — one for blocking vehicles on the highway, one for assault on police personnel, one for causing injury to the public, and another for spreading false information and provocation through social media.

Uttara Kannada Superintendent of Police Deepan MN said that continuous patrolling had been arranged across the town as a precautionary measure. "Section 163 (curfew) of the BNSS has been imposed for two days, including today. Action will be taken against those who violate orders," he added.

District in-charge Minister Mankal Vaidya told reporters the incident was unexpected and had escalated quickly towards confrontation. "Due to police intervention, peace has returned to the town," he added. *—PTI*

MINOR GIRL RAPED IN DHARWAD

DHARWAD, 25 MAY

The Vidyagiri police have arrested Khajasab Pathan under POCSO for allegedly raping a 14-year-old girl in Dharwad.

The accused lured the minor girl to an isolated place and raped her and got a video recording of the crime done on his cell-phone.

The passers-by adjoining the crime spot got suspicious after they saw the man and the minor girl coming out from a place close to the road. They caught the accused and found obscene footages in the mobile phone.

After probing the girl for some time, she spilled the beans and narrated the whole incident. *—Salar News*

B'luru to host India's 1st AI & Digital water summit

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has announced that it will host India's first and largest National AI & Digital Water Summit 2026 in Bengaluru on 27 May. The summit will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. It will bring together global experts, policymakers, startups, and urban planners to discuss AI-driven water governance, smart utilities, IoT monitoring, predictive analytics, and sustainable urban infrastructure.

BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar said the event, organised with Elets Technomedia, will highlight Bengaluru's digital transformation in water management, including SCADA systems, GIS mapping, tanker tracking, and smart metering. *—PTI*

KHANDRE ORDERS REMOVAL OF FOREST ENCROACHMENTS

UDUPI, 25 MAY

Karnataka Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment Eshwar Khandre reaffirmed the state's zero-tolerance policy on forest land encroachment, stating that no new encroachments would be permitted. He directed officials to clear all encroachments made after 2015. Speaking at a departmental progress review in Udupi, Khandre said that it has been certified that a total of two lakh acres of forest land had been encroached before 2015.

Decisions have been made that encroachments of less than three acres, including patta land encroachments for livelihood purposes, will not be evicted until alternative arrangements are made. Encroachments of over three acres are to be cleared. Khandre also ordered strict action to curb human–wildlife conflicts in areas such as Puttur, Hebri, Sulya, Uppinangadi, Belthangady, Venur, and Karkala. *—PTI*

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LIGHTS, CAMERA... 'PEDDI'!

Actors Ram Charan, Shiva Rajkumar and Janhvi Kapoor interact with fans in Bengaluru while promoting their upcoming film 'Peddi', on Monday. The event turned chaotic after excited fans mobbed Ram Charan during the press meet, with several trying to climb onto the stage. The actor reportedly suffered an injury *—MOHAMMED ASAD*

Karnataka launches centralised emergency, ambulance services

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

The government on Monday inaugurated a state-of-the-art Centralised Command and Control Centre (CCC) in Bengaluru to streamline emergency ambulance services across the state.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah inaugurated the facility, which was announced in the 2025–26 state budget. The initiative marks a major shift from the earlier Public-Private Partnership model under which the 108-ambulance service has operated since 2008, moving towards a fully government-owned system aimed at improving accountability, efficiency, and response times.

According to officials, the CCC integrates multiple emergency and health services, including 108 Arogya Kavacha ambulances, 104 Arogya Sahayavani, 112 Emergency Response Support System, Tele-MANAS (14416), eSanjeevani, Women's Helpline (181), and Child Helpline (1098), creating a unified emergency response network.

The system enables GPS-based ambulance tracking, computer-aided dispatch, real-time hospital mapping, automatic caller location detection, SMS alerts, and digital patient records. It will also allow two-way communication between ambulances and the control centre for faster coordination.

Developed on the CDAC NG-ERSS V2.0 platform, the CCC is supported by a 50-seat call centre connected through state digital infrastructure and telecom networks. Officials said it will be managed by senior IAS leadership with strict protocols to ensure rapid response and improved service delivery. *—PTI*

726 CRORE FREE BUS TICKETS ISSUED UNDER SHAKTI SCHEME SO FAR

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Over 726 crore free bus tickets have been issued to women under Karnataka's Shakti Scheme, the state government said, with a total expenditure of 18,943 crore in grants used to reimburse transport corporations.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on X stated that the flagship initiative reflects the government's commitment to fulfilling its electoral promises as it completes three years in office. In a post on X, he said the achievements of the government are being dedicated to the people of Karnataka.

He added that the Shakti scheme has enabled women to travel free on state-run buses for purposes such as employment, education, and general mobility, improving access and supporting economic independence while strengthening public transport usage.

The Chief Minister also said the government has successfully implemented its five guarantee schemes, reaching households across the state. He described the programmes as part of efforts to enhance welfare delivery and empower women across Karnataka. *—Salar News*

HDK accuses Cong govt of using SIR row to cover up failures

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

Union Minister and JD(S) State President HD Kumaraswamy on Sunday attacked the State Congress government, alleging that it is using the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls as a diversion to cover up its own failures.

Kumaraswamy said, "Congress is spreading propaganda about the SIR in the state…They keep raising one issue or another just to stay in the news. They spoke only about MGNREGA for days. Now they have taken up SIR… They have no intention of working for the people. They are using this issue to distract the public," he alleged.

Kumaraswamy accused the State of taking credit for rice supplied by the Centre. He also criticised the government's response to crop damage. "Banana and coconut crops have been destroyed by rain and storms in many parts of the state. While farmers are weeping, Congress leaders are fighting for chairs," Kumaraswamy alleged.

Kumaraswamy recently chaired a meeting to prepare for the upcoming GBA elections. Citing the Supreme Court's deadline for the polls, he accused the state government of trying to delay them and "snatch the rights of Bengaluru's people." *—ANI*

FIR filed after woman alleges filming in hospital restroom

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

An FIR was registered after a 36-year-old woman alleged that a male staff member at a private hospital here attempted to secretly photograph or record her inside a restroom, police said on Monday.

The incident occurred on 21 May at a hospital located on Sarjapur Road.

According to police, the woman alleged that while she was using the restroom, she noticed a male staff member behaving suspiciously and allegedly attempting to take photographs or videos using his mobile phone.

She developed a serious suspicion that he might have captured her photographs or videos while she was inside the restroom.

When she questioned him, he allegedly fled from the spot. She further said that as she was pregnant, the incident has caused her severe mental stress, fear, and humiliation. *—PTI*

1 more body found, toll in Bhatkal river drowning rises to 11

KARWAR, 25 MAY

One more body was recovered on Monday, taking the death toll to 11 in the Tatte Hakkalu river of Uttara Kannada district in Bhatkal, a day after a group attempting to collect freshwater mussels was swept away by strong currents, police said. According to police, 14 people from Shirali village had entered the river on Sunday to collect mussels.

When the water flow increased, the route became submerged, and the group was swept away. The tragedy has shaken the coastal community where mussel collection is a traditional seasonal livelihood. Ten of the bodies were recovered on Sunday.

The district administration has appealed to people to avoid entering rivers and streams during the monsoon season, when water levels can rise suddenly. It has also set up a relief camp and is providing immediate assistance to the bereaved families.

Superintendent of Police, Uttara Kannada, Deepan MN told reporters that three injured are at Manipal Hospital in Udupi and are out of danger. *—PTI*

EATING OUT GETS DEARER

Hotels warn of price hike over minimum wage revisions

BENGALURU, 25 MAY

The Karnataka State Hotels Association has warned that the government's decision to implement revised minimum wages will lead to a significant rise in food prices across hotels and restaurants. Noting that the average minimum wage increase is about 60 per cent from current wages, association president GK Shetty said a plate of Idli could jump from Rs 50 to Rs 80, while Masala Dosa might rise from Rs 80-90 to Rs 150.

Vegetarian meals costing Rs 150-200 could increase to Rs 250-300, and Bengaluru's biryani dishes could go from Rs 300-350 to nearly Rs 500. He added, "With such increases, eating out will become more expensive for ordinary citizens, impacting the hotel industry."

State has notified new minimum wages for both organised and unorganised sectors. An unskilled worker in Greater Bengaluru should be paid Rs 23,376 per month, while a highly skilled worker's wage is set at Rs 31,114. Outside Bengaluru, wages range from Rs 19,300 to Rs 21,251.

Shetty highlighted that the 60 per cent wage hike would increase operating costs for small and family-run hotels already grappling with rising expenses, including LPG prices and utility tariffs.

He emphasised, "Hotels provide food, lodging and other facilities. The government should have considered the industry's unique nature before imposing such a steep wage hike."

The association appealed to the government to reconsider the wage revisions. *—PTI*

TN CM Vijay steps up opposition to Mekedatu dam

CHENNAI, 25 MAY

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Vijay on Monday held detailed consultations with Cauvery water and legal experts over the Karnataka government's proposed groundbreaking ceremony for the Mekedatu dam across the Cauvery River. After reviewing the Supreme Court judgment and consulting legal experts, CM Vijay directed immediate follow-up legal action. It was also noted that during the 13 November hearing on the Mekedatu dam case. The SC neither approved the project nor has moved beyond the preliminary stage. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Keralam and Puducherry have a long-standing dispute over the Cauvery River water, with the Mekedatu dam being a new chapter in the conflict between the two states. —*ANI*

Mamata, Abhishek backing CJP, says O'Brien

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

TMC leaders Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee expressed full backing for the satirical digital outfit Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), said TMC Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien. Posting on X, he said both leaders remain focused on "fighting the good fight" and "expressed their fondness and full support for Cockroaches." The CJP, founded by Boston-based Abhijeet Dipke, gained attention after its launch on 16 May, amid controversy over remarks by CJI Surya Kant. It campaigns on social issues, including demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation. The group's social media accounts faced crackdowns recently, with the group resurface under new handles, and supporters see it as protest symbolism.—*PTI*

— PTI

Swami launches website for those selling cows

VARANASI, 25 MAY

Swami Avimukteshwaranand has announced a website where Hindus can list their cows for sale so that they are not sent to butchers for slaughter. The seer said the online platform would be named 'Go LX,' named after the popular digital classifieds platform OLX. Avimukteshwaranand said that cows sold by Hindus will no longer go to the butchers, and that "he will purchase it from them." He said that media reports say that Muslims are refraining from purchasing cows from Hindus, thereby causing losses to Hindu traders. Dismissing this as baseless, he asserted that a Hindu does not sell cows. "Should anyone do so, they are acting against dharma."—*PTI*

Delhi spent Rs 27 cr on Tegh Bahadur martyrdom events

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Delhi government spent around Rs 27 crore in three days for Guru Tegh Bahadur's 350th martyrdom day celebrations last November, according to information obtained through an RTI query filed by PTI. The highest expenditure was incurred on museum installations and tent city arrangements, while Rs 1 crore was spent on publicity, the RTI reply by the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) showed. It said that about Rs 27.03 crore was spent for the three-day event, out of which Rs 4.80 crore was used on the museum component, while Rs 4.75 crore was utilised for the tent city set up during the celebrations. The expenditure details showed that Rs 3.14 crore was spent on organising a mega Kirtan Darbar and Rs 1.78 crore on the light and sound show at the Red Fort facade. —*PTI*

Three AIADMK rebel MLAs resign, set to join TVK

Five rebel AIADMK MLAs go back to EPS camp

CHENNAI, 25 MAY

AIADMK rebels Maragatham Kumaravel, S Jayakumar, P Sathyabama —*ANI*

Three AIADMK legislators who were part of the rebel group led by senior leaders C Ve Shanmugam and S P Velumani, met Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker JCD Prabhakar on Monday and submitted their resignation from MLA posts. They are now set to join the ruling TVK.

Soon after meeting the Speaker, the three legislators, Maragatham Kumaravel, P Sathyabama and S Jayakumar, met senior TVK leader PWD minister Aadhav Arjuna.

The Speaker accepted the resignation of the three legislators, Kumaravel, who won from Maduranthakam, Sathyabama from Dharapuram, and Jayakumar, who got elected from Perundurai on AIADMK tickets.

Meanwhile, five MLAs from the Shanmugam-Velumani camp went back to party chief Edappadi K Palaniswami.

When reporters sought his response over the developments, Shanmugam said, "We will talk later."

The three AIADMK MLAs called on the Speaker and subitted their resignations. Dharapuram (Tiruppur) and Perundurai (Erode) are AIADMK's traditional strongholds, the 'kongu' region in western Tamil Nadu. Maduranthakam is near Chennai.Shortly thereafter, they met Aadhav Arjuna at his chamber. They are likely to join the Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam. The three were among the 25 legislators who voted for the TVK government during the 13 May floor test, defying the party diktat.

Meanwhile, the five AIADMK MLAs who had been in the Shanmugam-Velumani camp, shifted their allegiance back to party chief Palaniswami. With this, the number of Palaniswami-supporting MLAs in the Assembly has risen to 27. The legislators who left the Velumani camp included SM Sukumar (Arcot).With three resignations and five MLAs going back to the Palaniswami camp, the strength of the rebel side has now declined to 17, from 25. With the Speaker accepting the resignations, Tamil Nadu will witness by-elections to four Assembly constituencies. — *PTI*

Vijay waives off crop loans of marginal Tamil Nadu farmers

CHENNAI, 25 MAY

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay announced a complete waiver of cooperative bank crop loans of up to Rs 50,000 availed by marginal farmers across the state and up to Rs 5,000 to large farmers.

The move would benefit 14.22 lakh farmers and would entail an additional expenditure of Rs 2,044 crore to the government, he said on Monday.

The waiving of crop loans taken by farmers was among the numerous poll promises made by Vijay in the run up to the Assembly election.

A crop loan waiver of Rs 5,000 will be provided to big farmers who have taken crop loans through cooperative banks.

"This crop loan waiver will be of great benefit to farmers who wish to take loans for the upcoming cultivation season," the release quoting the Chief Minister said. — *PTI*

West Asia crisis, Indo-Pacific to top Quad agenda

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The economic fallout of the West Asia crisis, the prevailing security situation in the Indo-Pacific and ways to boost cooperation in critical minerals and technology are expected to top the agenda at the meeting of Quad foreign ministers on Tuesday.

The New Delhi meeting will be attended by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar presiding over it.

The Quad, comprising India, the US, Australia and Japan, has emerged as a key grouping focusing on peace, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

India is hosting the meeting in its capacity as the current chair of the coalition.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) indicated that the Quad's vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific would be the central focus of the deliberations.

The ministers will exchange views on advancing Quad cooperation across priority areas, review progress on initiatives and reflect on recent developments in the Indo-Pacific region and other international issues, it said last week.

People familiar with the preparations for the meeting said the Quad foreign ministers will deliberate on the pressing global challenges, including the conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia, and will take stock of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, a region that has been witnessing increasing Chinese assertiveness. US Secretary of State Rubio, after holding talks with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday, described the Quad as an important mechanism.

Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Penny Wong is set to travel to India on Monday to attend the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting and discuss shared interests including maritime security and rare critical minerals. — *PTI*

Rubio plays down anti-India rhetoric

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and his wife Jeanette Rubio at the Taj Mahal in Agra on Monday. The Iranian Consulate in Hyderabad reminded Rubio that the Taj Mahal was built by Iranian architects—*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

President Donald Trump is a big fan of India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday, seeking to dismiss allegations of rising anti-India rhetoric in the US.

Rubio's remarks on Monday came against the backdrop of a swirling controversy after the video of his response to a reporter's question on Sunday on instances of alleged racism towards Indians in the US went viral.

Although the reporter did not clarify, many saw his question as a reference to Trump's remarks referring to India along with China as a "hellhole" appearing to accuse people from the two countries of abusing America's birth-right citizenship.

"The President is a big fan of India and Modi. I wouldn't be here if the President didn't want me to be here. He wouldn't have sent someone like Sergio (Gor) to be our ambassador, someone who's very close to the President," Rubio said.

He said this when a journalist asked about the controversy and suggested that perhaps the reporter on Sunday was referring to President Trump's controversial comments against Indians.

The Secretary of State said he specifically asked the reporter whom he was referring to but he did not respond.

The reporter had asked: "There have been a lot of racist comments coming from the US against Indian-Americans. What's your take on that?"

Rubio remarked that "every country has stupid people" while responding to the question. — *PTI*

Kerala CM's temple visit kicks up a storm

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan offers prayers at the Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple, in Thrissur in Kerala on Sunday —*PTI*

T'PURAM, 25 MAY

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan's visit to the Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple has triggered a row, with the BJP alleging violation of a Kerala High Court order regulating VIP darshan on holidays and inconvenience to ordinary devotees.

In response, Satheesan dismissed it as a "false story" and said he had ensured that his darshan did not obstruct anyone.

Addressing a press meet here, he said, "There was no such incident there. Only four persons accompanied the Chief Minister."

Calling the reports "baseless," the CM said there was no VIP darshan on Sundays and he had entered the temple after taking a Rs 1,000 ticket.

"This is a false story. For the first time, just four people accompanied the chief minister. One among them was the temple administrator and the only official with me was a gunman," he said.

Satheesan said he stood aside and prayed while other devotees continued to move freely through the temple.

The controversy erupted after BJP leader B Gopalakrishnan alleged that Satheesan's visit to the Guruvayur Sree Krishna Temple on Sunday violated a Kerala HC order regulating VIP darshan on holidays and had inconvenienced ordinary devotees.

CM DEFENDS KELKAR

Chief Minister VD Satheesan defended the appointment of CEO Ratan U Kelkar as his secretary, stating that no political party in Kerala, including the BJP or the CPI(M), had raised any allegation against him before the elections.

Speaking to reporters after the Cabinet meeting on Monday, Satheesan said the appointment of a Chief Electoral Officer follows a standard constitutional process in which the state government submits a panel of officers and the CEC makes the final selection.

He also questioned the basis of the controversy surrounding Kelkar's appointment, saying that several officers who had earlier served as CEO had later occupied important posts. He cited former CEO Nalini Netto as an example, pointing out that she later served in the Home Department, became Chief Secretary and also worked in the CMO. — *PTI*

Assam UCC Bill bans polygamy, makes live-in registration must

GUWAHATI, 25 MAY

The UCC Bill introduced in the Assam Assembly proposes to make marriage and divorce registration mandatory—*PTI*

The Assam government tabled a Bill on Uniform Civil Code on Monday, seeking to ban polygamy and make registration of live-in relationships compulsory.

The Bill, however, said that it will not be applicable to Scheduled Tribes.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Atul Bora tabled 'The Uniform Civil Code, Assam, 2026 Bill' in the assembly on behalf of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The Congress, Raijor Dal and the Trinamool Congress, opposed the move and demanded wider consultation.

"The Bill aims to consolidate and simplify laws governing marriage, divorce, succession, and live-ins," Sarma said in the 'Statement of Object and Reasons' in the Bill. For marriage, the Bill sets 21 years and 18 years as minimum age for men and women respectively, and prohibits polygamy, he added.

The Bill proposes to make marriage and divorce registration compulsory.

"For the first time, the Bill provides a legal framework for live-in relationships. By requiring registration, the law ensures that the rights of partners, and any children born from such unions, are formally recognised," the CM said in the Bill. — *PTI*

Congress leader Alka Lamba convicted in police assault case

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

A Delhi court has convicted Congress leader Alka Lamba in a case related to an assault on police personnel during a protest at Jantar Mantar in 2024.

Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Ashwani Panwar convicted Lamba and scheduled 5 June for hearing arguments on her sentencing. A detailed order is awaited.

The prosecution alleged that Lamba, president of the All India Mahila Congress, obstructed police and blocked a public road while protesting for women's reservation on 29 July 2024. In December, a court ordered charges to be framed against Lamba for assaulting to deter a public servant from duty, obstruction of a public official, disobedience to a duly promulgated order, and danger or obstruction in a public way. — *PTI*

Why is Modi not buying cheap Russian oil: Kejri

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

After petrol and diesel prices were increased for the fourth time in less than two weeks on Monday, AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal questioned Prime Minister Modi over the Centre not buying fuel from Russia and Iran. "Oil prices have risen again. Russia and Iran are offering us cheaper and sufficient oil and gas. Why is Prime Minister Modi not buying cheap oil from them?" Kejriwal said in a video message on X.

Stating that 140 crore people in the country are facing hardships due to inflation, the former Delhi CM said, "What are the prime minister's compulsions? 140 crore people are forced to face hardships, yet we are not buying oil from Russia or Iran."

The AAP leader also appealed to citizens to send him their views on the matter.

Petrol prices were raised by Rs 2.61 a litre and diesel by Rs 2.71 on Monday, the fourth hike in less than two weeks that extended a delayed pass-through of soaring global crude oil costs triggered by the Iran conflict.

The latest increase took cumulative hikes since May 15 to nearly Rs 7.5 per litre. Fuel prices have now reached their highest levels since May 2022 after remaining frozen for two years, barring a Rs 2-per-litre cut in March 2024 ahead of national elections. — *PTI*

BJD MP Samantaray quits BJD, likely to join BJP

BHUBANESWAR, 25 MAY

BJD MP Debashish Samantaray announced his resignation from the party and the Rajya Sabha, alleging systematic belittling within the organisation.

After resigning, he met Rajya Sabha chairman CP Radhakrishnan to submit his resignation. A close associate of BJD chief Naveen Patnaik, Samantaray said he would soon join the BJP, with talks finalised.

Sources indicate Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and BJP state president Manmohan Samal are in Delhi, and Samantaray may join BJP later today or tomorrow in their presence. Samantaray criticised VK Pandian, blaming him for the party's 2024 defeat, and said he was prevented from meeting Patnaik. — *PTI*

INFILTRATION CHECK

WB starts 'detect, delete, deport'

MALDA, 25 MAY

West Bengal's BJP government operationalised on Monday its "detect, delete and deport" policy, with Malda becoming the first district to set up a holding centre for illegal foreigners, where nine suspected Bangladeshis have been housed.

The holding centre, set up at Chandan Park in English Bazaar and currently the only such facility in Malda district, began functioning after nine people, including three women and six minors, were brought there from Gazole's Pandua area on Sunday, senior police officers said.

The facility has been placed under layered security cover with CCTV surveillance, deployment of 12 police personnel, civil defence staff and civic volunteers, along with arrangements for food and upkeep, an officer said.

Another police officer in Malda said the facility has been created to temporarily accommodate foreigners detained for illegal entry or lack of documents.

The development comes barely two days after the state Home and Hill Affairs Department's Foreigners' Branch directed all district administrations to establish "holding centres" for "apprehended foreigners" and "released foreign prisoners awaiting deportation or repatriation," giving institutional shape to one of the BJP's most resonant themes in Bengal.

Last week, Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari announced that infiltrators detained by the police would be handed over directly to the BSF for deportation.He had maintained that those outside the purview of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act would be treated as illegals.

Under the proposed mechanism, the BSF would coordinate with Border Guards Bangladesh for deportation, the officials said. — *PTI*

— SCREENGRAB

Kapurthala jail clash: 31 inmates booked for rioting

CHANDIGARH, 25 MAY

Police have booked 31 inmates in Kapurthala Central Jail over a clash that injured three prisoners on Saturday night. Senior Superintendent Gaurav Toora said the inmates faced charges of rioting, arson, attempt to murder, obstructing officials, and conspiracy. During the riot, inmates tried to manhandle staff, set fires outside their barracks, and reached the roof after breaking gates and grills. Two inmates were injured, with one hit by a teargas shell. Police seized iron rods, sticks and mobile phones from rioters. Opposition flayed state CM Mann over lawlessness. —PTI

Couple held for duping families with fake brides

DEWAS, 25 MAY

Madhya Pradesh police have busted a marriage racket by arresting Mukesh and Sunita Das Bairagi, who allegedly duped 42 grooms' families after promising to marry them to women from an orphanage in Dewas. A case was registered late Sunday night against four persons, with two others still absconding. The fraudsters convinced families that the prospective brides were from an orphanage in Indore, using photos from social media to pose as real brides. They charged Rs 10,000 to Rs 25,000 for wedding ceremony at a religious site in Dewas. The victims arrived at the venue on Sunday evening and realised they had been cheated. —PTI

UP groom murder accused killed in encounter

JAUNPUR, 25 MAY

The main suspect in the 1 May murder of a groom during his wedding procession in Jaunpur, in Uttar Pradesh, was shot dead in a police encounter early Monday. The deceased, Ravi Yadav, 23, had a Rs 1 lakh bounty on his head. Police said he opened fire when they approached him near Rani Ka Mod, sustaining serious injuries and dying at hospital. The incident was linked to a conspiracy involving the bride's maternal cousin, who opposed the marriage. In the exchange, Line Bazar SHO KK Singh was also injured by a bullet. The police are hunting for a second suspect. —PTI

30 Kolkata cops under lens in land grab case

KOLKATA, 25 MAY

Nearly 30 Kolkata Police personnel are under the ED scanner in connection with an alleged land-grabbing racket in the city, a senior official of the central probe agency said on Monday. Police personnel of different ranks are suspected of having links with a syndicate accused of coercing senior citizens into selling properties at below-market prices, he said. "We have come across certain documents and digital evidence which are being analysed. The probe is now focused on establishing the money trail and identifying all beneficiaries," a senior ED official said. ED is currently probing the role of three arrested accused Sona Pappu, former Kolkata Police deputy commissioner Santanu Sinha Biswas, and Joy Kamdar. —PTI

Corrigendum

The Salar English Digital Daily edition on 25 May, 2026, erroneously mentioned Education Minister Dhar-mendra Pradhan seeking action regarding CBSE glitches in our story titled 'Twisha cremated after 2nd au-topsy'. We regret this mistake.

Pained by talks of shielding Twisha's accused, says SC

Apex court asks media to show restraint

NEW DELHI/ BHOPAL, 25 MAY

Observing that it was "pained" by the narrative that the judiciary was shielding the accused, the Supreme Court on Monday said it would ensure a fair, independent, and impartial CBI probe into the death of former model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma.

The apex court took suo motu cognisance of the Twisha Sharma case after a media report raised questions of institutional bias in the probe, including allegations that a fair investigation was being denied because the accused is a lawyer and his mother is a former district judge.

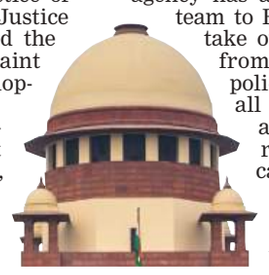
Solicitor General Tushar Mehta informed the apex court that the CBI would take over the probe and assured that the administrative steps would be taken today itself.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked the media to exercise restraint while reporting developments in the case.

The police have registered an FIR against the woman's husband, Samarth Singh, a lawyer, and her mother-in-law, former district judge Giribala Singh, on charges of dowry harassment.

Family members of former model-turned-actor Twisha Sharma, during the latter's last rites, at Bhadbhada Vishram Ghat in Bhopal —PTI

The CBI is set to take over the investigation into the death of Twisha Sharma, officials said on Monday. The agency has already sent a team to Bhopal. It will take over the probe from the state police and collect all the evidence and documents related to the case, they said.



Meanwhile, in Bhopal, Police have begun detailed questioning of retired judge Giribala Singh and her lawyer son Samarth Singh in connection with the death of his wife Twisha Sharma, who was allegedly harassed for dowry, officials said on Monday.

The information provided by the two accused is being verified, they said, adding that no conclusion has been reached so far. Samarth Singh, who is currently in police custody, has apparently told investigators that their relations turned sour after Twisha became pregnant, according to sources. —PTI

Don't be sentimental: SC junks plea against CJP

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to grant an urgent hearing on a plea seeking a probe into allegations regarding fake advocates and activities associated with the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a satirical digital outfit that recently took social media by storm.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi asked advocate N K Goswami, appearing for the petitioner, not to take the issue "so sentimentally."

Goswami submitted that despite the CJI's clarification, a distorted and malicious narrative was continuing.

"Don't take it so sentimentally," the CJI said. Another advocate submitted that they were seeking a CBI probe into the issue of fake law degrees and said courtroom exchanges cannot be used for commercial purposes.

The CJI replied, "There is no such grave urgency. We will see."

The petition has also sought action against those involved in the alleged commercial exploitation of oral observations made during court proceedings. It sought an investigation into alleged fake advocates practising law using fraudulent degrees. Expressing concern over the misuse of judicial proceedings, the plea claimed that remarks and observations made during the court proceedings were being used for publicity campaigns.The CJP came up after CJI Surya Kant remark on "cockroaches". —PTI

SC JUNKS PLEA AGAINST BALLOT PAPERS IN PUNJAB POLLS

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Supreme Court on Monday junked a plea challenging the Punjab State Election Commission's decision of holding the polls for municipal corporations, municipal councils and nagar panchayats through ballot papers.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi questioned the petitioner Ruchita Garg for approaching the court late, and said it cannot destabilise the election process now.

"Elections are tomorrow, what can be done now? There is no time left," the bench said.

"There was no need for you to wait for the formal notification of election schedule being issued. You knew that elections are to be held. There have been several rounds of litigations earlier," the bench said.

The counsel for the petitioner said elections are sought be conducted by ballot papers and referred to the top court's judgement in ADR case which said EVMs have to be the norm. —PTI

SC refuses mentioning Punjab CM's remark on dogs

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain the mentioning of a plea which alleged that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had said that the apex court has given a "free hand" to kill stray dogs.

"If a CM makes a statement, does that mean we have to change our order?" a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta told the counsel. The counsel said after the top court's 19 May order in the stray dogs case, the Punjab chief minister had allegedly stated that the Supreme Court "has given a free hand to kill stray dogs". —PTI

SC to hear plea on Rs 500 cr UAE money decree in July

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Taking note of a failed mediation process undertaken by former Chief Justice of India U U Lalit, the Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear in July a plea related to the execution of a money decree of Rs 500 crore passed by a UAE court in favour of Ras Al Khaimah Investment Authority and against Hyderabad-based industrialist Nimmagadda Prasad.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Ras Al Khaimah Investment Authority (RAKIA), informed a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant that mediatio has failed. —PTI

Nagas protest for release of 6 civilians

IMPHAL, 25 MAY

Hundreds of Nagas on Monday staged a protest rally in Manipur's capital Imphal, demanding the immediate release of six civilians allegedly held hostage by suspected Kuki militants.

Organised by the Naga People's Union Imphal, the rally, joined by several members of the Meitei community, began from the Tribal Market area in Imphal East district and headed towards the chief minister's bungalow.

The protesters were stopped by a large contingent of security personnel near the Palace Gate, around 200 metres from the chief minister's residence, after marching nearly 300 metres, officials said.

A delegation of the union was, however, allowed to go and submit a memorandum to Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh.

In the memorandum, the organisation demanded immediate action against armed Kuki militants allegedly involved in the abduction of six Naga civilians.

It also sought the removal of Deputy Chief Minister Nemcha Kipgen from the council of ministers, alleging that her husband heads the militant outfit, Kuki National Front (Presidential), and was responsible for the abduction.

The memorandum also demanded abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact between the Centre, the state government and Kuki militant groups, besides deportation of "Kuki refugees". —PTI

Security personnel intensify vigil and seal border areas during an anti-terror operation following an encounter in Rajouri on Monday —PTI

Op 'Sheruwali' on in J&K to hunt for ultras

JAMMU, 25 MAY

A search to track down suspected terrorists believed to be hiding in the dense woods of Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district entered the third day on Monday, officials said.

A joint team of the Army, J&K Police and the CRPF launched the operation on Saturday after inputs about suspected terrorists.

An encounter broke out between terrorists and security forces in the Dorimal-Gambhir Moghla belt on Saturday after the launch of 'Operation Sheruwali'.

Armed with drones and sniffer dogs, joint teams have expanded the searches to adjoining areas, intensifying operations and strengthening the cordon, officials said.

The operation led to a brief exchange of fire after contact was established with the suspected terrorists, prompting security forces to continue searches in the forested terrain.

According to preliminary reports, the movement of two to three terrorists was suspected in the area.

NIA RAIDS

The NIA raided three places in Srinagar and Shopian districts on Monday, including Darul Uloom Sirajul Uloom, which was declared illegal last month.

NIA sleuths searched the school in the Imam Sahib area of Shopian in the early hours. Another NIA team searched house Jamaat-e-Islami, Shahzada Aurangzeb, at Molu Chitragam district. — PTI

CBSE OSM trouble: Students claim answer sheet mismatch

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Amid growing complaints over glitches and discrepancies in the CBSE re-evaluation process, some Class 12 students have alleged that the scanned copies of their answer sheets uploaded by the board did not match their handwriting, raising concerns over possible answer-sheet mismatch in the On Screen Marking (OSM) system.

The CBSE has taken up on "top priority" the cases related to alleged mismatched answer sheets and other concerns faced by students in the re-evaluation process, a source in the board said.

The assurances came after a social media post of a Delhi-based Class 12 student, Vedant, went viral in which he alleged that the Physics answer sheet uploaded by the CBSE under the re-evaluation process was not his. Several other students also took to social media with similar claims.

"Whatever complaints are coming, online or offline, by any means, CBSE is actively taking them up," the source said while asserting that the board remains committed to helping the students.

Referring to complaints raised by other students as well, the sources said, "Not only one student, but all such matters are being examined seriously. In some cases, the issues have also been resolved."

Vedant's post, which garnered over 2.5 million views on X, said he and his family discovered that the handwriting in the Physics answer sheet provided by CBSE did not match his own.

Some reports on social media claimed that CBSE has shared Vedant's correct Physics answer book with him and informed the student that his result would be updated based on the new marks of Physics shortly," the email read. However, the CBSE did not confirm this.

Several social media users, however, initially trolled Vedant, questioning whether the newly-created handle was actually of a CSBE student, with some even calling him "anti-national" and "Pakistani", but others, including opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, came to his defence. "After receiving unexpectedly low marks in Physics, we applied for photocopies of my answer sheets through the CBSE re-evaluation process. Today we received the copies. And I am shattered because the Physics answer sheet uploaded by CBSE is not mine," the student wrote on X. —PTI

Girl killed as light post falls on her in Kolkata

KOLKATA, 25 MAY

A seven-year-old girl died after a portion of a roadside light post fell on her in Kolkata's Hastings area on Monday morning, police said. The deceased has been identified as Gudiya Khatun, who lived with her family under the Hastings flyover, they said.

The incident took place around 7am when the upper portion of the light post fell on the child standing below it, a senior police officer said, adding that she suffered severe head injuries and died on the spot. The body was sent for post-mortem examination, and an inquiry had been initiated into the incident, he added.

"Prima facie, it appears that a part of the structure detached from the pole and fell. We are examining whether there was any lapse in maintenance," the policeman said.

Locals alleged that the light post had been in poor condition for a long time and that no maintenance work had been carried out in the area. — PTI

CBI SEEKS REMAND OF ACCUSED

Principal leaked NEET papers for money

PUNE, 25 MAY

A Pune school principal, arrested in connection with the NEET-UG paper leak case, allegedly shared examination-related questions and content with a few students for monetary benefits, the CBI has told a court here.

The federal agency made the submission while seeking the remand of school principal Manisha Sanjay Havaldar, sources said on Sunday.

The Central Bureau of Intelligence (CBI) arrested Havaldar on Friday, calling her another "source" of the alleged paper leak. Havaldar, the principal of Seth Hiralal Saraf Prashala, worked as an empanelled translator for Physics for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET UG)-2026.

Following her arrest, she was produced before a court in Pune and is currently in transit remand. She is likely to be produced in a Delhi court on Monday.

The CBI informed the Pune court that its investigation into the case showed that Havaldar, in collusion with botany teacher Manisha Mandhare, now in custody, allegedly shared NEET-related questions and content with a few students in exchange for monetary benefits.

Sources said the CBI told the court that handwritten notes containing NEET-related questions were prepared and retained by Havaldar during her NTA (National Testing Agency) assignment. The confidential material was shared through WhatsApp. —PTI

Delhi records warmest May night in nearly 14 years

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Delhi experienced its warmest night for May in nearly 14 years, with the minimum temperature reaching 32.4°C, 5.7°C above normal. The last time the minimum was higher in this month was on May 26, 2012, when it was recorded at 32.5°C. Earlier this month, the minimum temperature stood at 31.9°C on May 21.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported minimum temperatures at Palam (30.5°C), Lodi Road (30°C), Ridge (30.6°C), and Ayanagar (32°C), all above normal. An IMD official said, "Warm night conditions have been recorded at Safdarjung, Lodi Road, and Ayanagar."

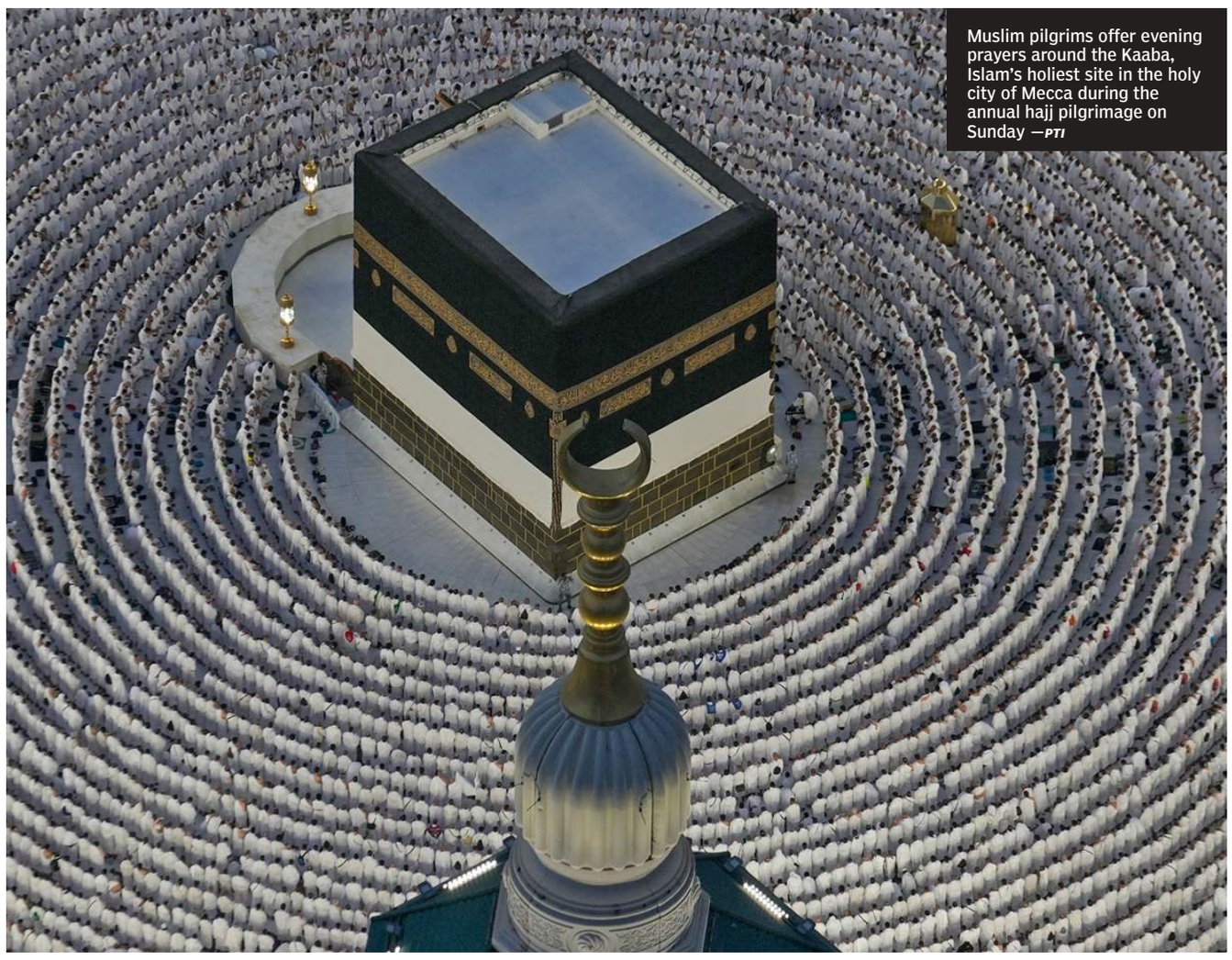
A warm night is declared when the maximum temperature remains 40°C or more. The IMD issued a yellow alert for heatwave, with temperatures expected to reach around 44°C.

Delhi also witnessed dust storms on Sunday evening, causing air quality deterioration. The city's Air Quality Index (AQI) was 206, in the 'poor' category. —PTI

MUSLIMS BRAVE HEAT & WAR ANXIETY FOR HAJJ

ABOUT HAJJ

The Hajj is the annual Islamic pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia. As one of the Five Pillars of Islam, it is a mandatory religious duty that every physically and financially capable Muslim must perform at least once in their lifetime. The pilgrimage takes place over 5 to 6 days during the Islamic month of Dhul Hijjah and involves several deeply symbolic physical and spiritual rituals. For Muslims, Hajj is a profound act of faith and submission. It is believed that a sincerely performed Hajj wipes clean all of a person's previous sins.



Muslim pilgrims offer evening prayers around the Kaaba, Islam's holiest site in the holy city of Mecca during the annual hajj pilgrimage on Sunday —PTI

The annual Hajj pilgrimage, one of the Five Pillars of Islam, officially began on Monday.

More than 1.5 million pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia from outside the country, Saleh bin Saad Al-Murabba, commander of the Hajj passport forces, said Friday. The faithful have been pouring into the country for the Hajj against the backdrop of a tenuous ceasefire in the Iran war and related regional tensions and uncertainty.

Egyptian pilgrim Samya Abdul Moneim said she was grateful to God that she made it to the Hajj, which is required once in a lifetime of every Muslim who can afford it and is physically able to make it.

"I am in a state of blessing and happiness," she said in Mecca on Sunday. "It's an indescribable feeling, truly. I mean, thank God, I am in a blessing."

Typically on the first day, many pilgrims in Mecca converge on a vast tent camp in the nearby desert. Ahead of that, pilgrims have been circling the cube-shaped Kaaba in the Grand Mosque in sweltering temperatures. For pilgrims, Hajj can be a deeply moving spiritual experience and a chance to seek God's forgiveness and the erasure of past sins. Pilgrims perform the Hajj rituals over several days.

SWELTERING HEAT

Some spend many years hoping and praying to one day perform the Hajj or saving up money and waiting for a permit to embark on the trip.

As they brave the intense heat to perform religious rituals, many pilgrims have been using umbrellas for shade and carrying handheld fans. Volunteers hand out water bottles to help them stay hydrated and large fans spray fine mists of water.

On Saturday, US President Donald Trump said a deal with Iran on the war, including opening the Strait of Hormuz, has been "largely negotiated" after calls with Israel and other allies in the region. He described it as a "Memorandum of Understanding pertaining to PEACE" that still must be finalised by the United States, Iran and the other countries that participated in the calls. That capped a week in which the US weighed a new round of attacks on Iran.

Ahead of the trip for Hajj, some have said they were leaning on their faith as they embark on the journey amid the tensions and that they were feeling immense gratitude for the opportunity to go.

Hajj brings together large numbers of Muslims of diverse races, ethnicities, languages and economic classes, creating a sense of unity for many.

REGIONAL TENSIONS

With uncertainty and global concerns high, authorities in Indonesia, home to the world's largest Muslim population, have in the run-up to the Hajj season emphasised contingency planning for the pilgrimage and issued instructions to ensure that additional travel costs not be passed on to Indonesian pilgrims.

In India, home to a large Muslim minority, pilgrimage planning has proceeded largely as normal, but high fuel prices have pushed up travel costs for pilgrims.

A reopening of the strait would begin to ease a worldwide energy crisis sparked by the US and Israeli attacks on Iran on 28 February, which led Tehran to effectively close the waterway. Prices have spiked for oil, gas and several related products, jolting the world economy.

The US has blockaded Iranian ports for over a month, and Trump on Sunday said the blockade "will remain in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified, and signed." In response to the US-Israeli attacks, Iran has launched retaliatory strikes and the conflict widened; a fragile ceasefire was then reached in April.

In Saudi Arabia, pilgrims have been doing the ritual circuit around the Kaaba since arriving in Mecca over recent days. Pilgrims who make their way to Mina will camp in the vast tent city and pray and worship.

On Tuesday, in what is considered the pinnacle of the pilgrimage, the pilgrims will stand on the plain of Arafat, where they praise God, plead for forgiveness and make supplications.

Many carry prayer requests from loved ones and raise their hands in worship with tears streaming down their faces. —PTI

A Muslim pilgrim prays in front of the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia on Sunday —PTI

Pilgrims arrive to board the Haramain High Speed train to Mecca, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia —PTI

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Pope calls for AI regulation, warns of threat to humanity

Pope Leo receives in audience members of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Demography —@VATICAN MEDIA

Pope Leo XIV called Monday for robust regulation of artificial intelligence and for its developers to work for the common good rather than profit, issuing a sweeping manifesto on safeguarding humankind as the technology impacts everything from work to war.

"Magnifica Humanitas" (Magnificent Humanity), Leo's first encyclical, has been eagerly awaited ever since history's first US-born pope announced days after his election that he considered AI to be the biggest challenge facing humanity today.

In the text, Leo denounced the "culture of power" driving the AI race, especially in developing ever more sophisticated methods of remote warfare. He declared that it was "not permissible" to entrust irreversible, lethal decisions to AI systems, setting up another flash point between the American pope and the Trump administration, which has worked aggressively to deregulate AI development.

Experts in the tech industry, academia and Catholic morality said the document will likely become a benchmark in the debate over AI, a point of reference for policymakers, researchers and ordinary folk alike. It comes as the near-daily developments in technology trigger concerns that rise over AI replacing human jobs and even human intelligence.

"It lends itself to people who are at the forefront of these tools and able to see the incredible things that they're able to do, to have questions about their own: What does it mean to be human?" said Taylor Black, a Microsoft AI executive and director of Catholic University of America's AI institute.

Pope calls out AI firms while hosting Anthropic

The pope was to present the text at a Vatican launch Monday that featured the co-founder of Anthropic, which is currently locked in a legal battle with the Trump administration over access to its AI technology. The Vatican decided to involve Anthropic as part of its decade-long effort to engage Silicon Valley in dialogue over the human cost of AI.

And yet in his text, Leo repeatedly blasted the concentration of power and data in the hands of so few people in the private sector as a danger, especially to children and the most vulnerable, and called for external regulation of their work.

"It is not enough to invoke ethics in the abstract; robust legal frameworks, independent oversight, informed users and a political system that does not abdicate its responsibility are required," he wrote. "A more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few."

Leo appealed several times to AI developers and political leaders responsible for regulating them to slow down and reflect on what they are doing. He urged them to use ethical and spiritual guidelines to make the choice to work not for their own profit or power, but for the betterment of humanity.

AI competitors OpenAI and Anthropic are the second and third-most valuable US private companies, each valued at hundreds of billions of dollars, more than the GDP of many nations.

Experts say the text will become a benchmark

In a methodical text, the math major pope traced the history of the Catholic Church's social teaching and applied its core concepts — justice, solidarity, the dignity of work and the universal destination of resources — to the digital revolution.

"I am convinced that this will prove to be a defining document for our era, a profound and prophetic document," said Paolo Carozza, law professor at Notre Dame Law School and chair of the Meta oversight board.

"Pope Leo is offering a clear, comprehensive, and coherent voice urging us to take responsibility for constructing a world in which technology will serve humans rather than degrade them," he said.

"A more moral AI is not enough if that morality is determined by a few."

In its strongest chapters, Leo denounced how AI had helped accelerate the "normalisation of war" by desensitising people to its cost. He didn't name specific conflicts, but cited "opposing imperialisms, between powers that wish to preserve their supremacy, and those that aspire to seize that supremacy."

He demanded transparency and accountability by AI developers so that the chain of decision-making command in ordering strikes with AI weaponry is always known. He declared that the Catholic Church's "just war" theory, which provides specific criteria for when force can be justified, was now "outdated" given the technological advances of warfare.

A text in the church's social justice tradition

Leo signed the text May 15, the 135th anniversary of the publication of "Rerum Novarum" (Of New Things), the most important teaching document of Leo's hero and namesake, Pope Leo XIII. That document addressed workers' rights, the limits of capitalism, and the obligations that states and employers owed workers as the Industrial Revolution was underway.

It became the foundation of modern Catholic social thought, and the current pope cited it at the start of his pontificate in relation to the AI revolution, which he believes poses the same existential questions that the Industrial Revolution posed over a century ago. "Magnifica Humanitas" thus becomes the latest chapter in a century-long history of popes adapting "Rerum Novarum" to the social questions of their times, often dwelling on the dignity of work for human flourishing.

AI is evoking both existential fears and utopian visions amid an intensifying debate on whether it will become a catalyst that enriches humanity or a technological toxin that dulls human intelligence while wiping out millions of high-paying jobs.

"The pursuit of greater profits cannot justify choices that systematically sacrifice jobs, because the human person is an end, not a means, and the economic order must remain subordinate to human dignity and the common good," Leo wrote. Leo extended his concern for upholding human dignity in labour to issue the first-ever papal apology for the Holy See's own role in legitimising slavery.

Past popes have apologised for Christians' involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. But no pope has ever publicly acknowledged, much less apologised for, the role that popes themselves played in giving European sovereigns explicit authority to subjugate and enslave "infidels."

A decade-long dialogue with Silicon Valley

Vatican officials declined to say who exactly contributed to Leo's encyclical. But Vatican and church officials have been engaged in a dialogue with Silicon Valley tech firms for a decade. Toward the end of his pontificate, Pope Francis began speaking out more about AI and the risks it poses to humanity.

The decision to include Anthropic at the Vatican launch was criticised by some who considered it a papal stamp of approval of the AI firm.

In February, the Trump administration ordered all US agencies to stop using Anthropic's technology after it refused to allow the US military unrestricted use of it. Anthropic, which bills itself as the AI company that puts safety and risk mitigation at the forefront of its research, is currently suing the administration.

Brian Boyd, US faith liaison for the nonprofit Future of Life Institute, read the inclusion of Anthropic's co-founder Christopher Olah as similar to a papal audience with a head of state: not an endorsement.

"I think it's more like a recognition of (how) this is an extremely powerful company that's currently winning this race to replace human workers," Boyd said.

Anthropic is an "enormous corporation that is taking on itself an enormous risk and responsibility," Boyd continued, but said the company has "demonstrated genuine goodwill and integrity and interest in dialogue." —PTI

— ANI

Ghalibaf elected as Iran's Speaker for 7th time

TEHRAN, 25 MAY

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf has been re-elected as Iran's Parliament speaker for the seventh time, securing 235 votes out of 271, according to ISNA. The semi-official news agency reports that he remains the speaker amid ongoing peace negotiations with the United States. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Email Baqaei said, "The focus of the negotiations is on ending the war, and at this stage, we are not discussing details of the nuclear issue." —*ANI*

20 hospitalised after spray attack in Tokyo

TOKYO, 25 MAY

More than 20 people suffered sore throats and felt unwell near a luxury department store in Tokyo's upscale Ginza shopping district after an unknown substance was allegedly sprayed on Monday, Japanese fire officials said. The Tokyo Fire Department reported that 26 people experienced sudden throat pain and discomfort near Ginza Six, with all but one taken to hospital. The officials described their symptoms as mild. An investigation is ongoing, with police detecting traces of pepper spray on a wall, according to the Yomiuri newspaper. Fire engines and ambulances were stationed outside the complex, and roads were closed. Television footage showed firefighters and officials in hazmat suits assisting people, some being evacuated. —*ANI*

4 dead, 17 missing after hotel collapses in Philippines

ANGELES, 25 MAY

Rescuers in Angeles City, Philippines, pulled out three individuals from the rubble of a nine-storey hotel under construction that collapsed during a thunderstorm, bringing the death toll to four with 17 still missing. Two victims were confirmed dead, with emergency efforts to revive another unsuccessful. Rescuers struggled to extricate workers trapped beneath concrete and iron. Angeles City Mayor Carmelo Lazatin said rescue operations would continue, focusing on finding survivors rather than body recovery. Relatives of trapped workers expressed growing anxiety, with one woman saying, "I'm losing hope because of what I see." The incident remains under investigation, with authorities reviewing safety violations. —*PTI*

Indian charged after 13 overstay in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 25 MAY

A 26-year-old Indian has been charged in Singapore for harbouring and employing 13 immigration offenders from India after their visit passes expired, authorities said. Kanojiya Riken, along with two Singaporeans, faced charges on 21 May.

Riken allegedly allowed the Indian nationals, aged 19 to 44, to stay unlawfully in a flat between December 2025 and March 2026 without verifying their valid passes. The police raided the flat on 3 March.

Singaporean Song Yi Da, 37, was charged for employing an Indian man without a valid work permit and has been deported and barred re-entry. Another Singaporean, Suba Priyadarsahini, 32, was charged for employing an Indian man unlawfully in Singapore, also deported and barred. —*PTI*

Xi hails 'unbreakable' China-Pak ties

Shehbaz, Munir meet Xi in China; Beijing hails Islamabad's efforts to resolve Iran war

BEIJING, 25 MAY

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing (**in pic**), where both leaders reaffirmed the "unbreakable" friendship between China and Pakistan and discussed regional peace efforts in West Asia.

Xi described Sharif as an "old friend" and said the two countries had long shared mutual trust, understanding and support, calling their ties an "unbreakable traditional friendship," according to state media reports. He also commended Pakistan for taking initiatives to help restore peace in West Asia and welcomed its constructive diplomatic role.

Sharif, accompanied by Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir, thanked China for its support in regional mediation efforts, including contacts linked to US-Iran dialogue. He said China's proposals on West Asia offered useful guidance for peace.

Earlier, Sharif held delegation-level talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People, where he said Pakistan and China must "really be together" amid growing global tensions. He noted that the world was passing

through a "very critical moment," citing instability in the Gulf and ongoing diplomatic efforts involving Iran and the United States.

The Pakistani prime minister described China and Pakistan as "iron brothers" and stressed that their relationship was based on mutual trust, strategic cooperation, and shared development goals. He also expressed appreciation for China's consistent support for Pakistan's economic stability and development.

Both sides reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral relations, including political, economic, security, and people-to-people ties, and expressed satisfaction over steady progress. Sharif reiterated Pakistan's commitment to the high-quality development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), focusing on industrialisation, agriculture, technology, clean energy, and digital transformation.

He also highlighted efforts to align China's development plans with Pakistan's "Uraan Pakistan" framework. The leaders agreed to deepen cooperation in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, space, and advanced technologies, and reaffirmed security guarantees for Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan.

Separately, multiple agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed covering trade, climate change, education, science and technology, and counterterrorism cooperation. —*PTI*

'Iran used Dubai route to smuggle Chinese tech'

DUBAI/TEHRAN, 25 MAY

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) allegedly used a UAE-based network to secretly procure advanced Chinese satellite communication equipment. These were linked to its drone and missile programme, according to a Financial Times investigation based on leaked shipping records and contracts.

The report said nearly 1.8 tonnes of Chinese-made satellite antenna and communication equipment were shipped from Shanghai to Iran via Dubai in late 2025 through UAE-based company Telesun. The cargo included a 4.5-metre motorised satellite antenna and related accessories packed in six cases.

The shipment was reportedly unloaded at Dubai's Jebel Ali port before being transported to Iran's Bandar Abbas aboard the Iranian vessel Rama III, which allegedly spoofed GPS signals near Oman to conceal its route.

The equipment was allegedly intended for the IRGC Aerospace Force and delivered to a telecom firm linked to the sanctioned Saman Industrial Group. Shipping agent Blue Calm Marine Services, also sanctioned by the US, handled the cargo. —*AGENCIES*

Trump asks mediators to join Abraham Accords

WASHINGTON/ TEHRAN, 25 MAY

US President Donald Trump on Monday said negotiations with Iran to end the war were progressing "nicely", but officials pointed out that a final decision may take some time due to the complex communication networks Tehran deploys to consult with its supreme leader.

On Truth Social, Trump also said that countries involved in the peace talks with Iran should sign on to the Abraham Accords, which deal with establishing diplomatic, economic and security ties between Israel and Arab nations. He said it would be an honour to have Iran as a signatory to the Accords.

"...after all the work done by the United States to try and pull this very complex puzzle together, it should be mandatory that all of these Countries, at a minimum, simultaneously, sign onto the Abraham Accords," Trump said, adding that it may be accepted if one or two have a reason for not doing so.

Among the negotiators, the UAE and Bahrain are already members of the Accords, and Trump expects Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt and Jordan to sign up.

Meanwhile, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Email Baqaei said that negotiations are focused on ending the war, and that details about the nuclear issue have not been discussed. He said that the frequency of changes coming in from US' side as peace talks remain underway, were complicating the situation.

He affirmed that while the parties have arrived on conclusion over many topics, an agreement has not been signed. —*Agencies*

Iran deal will involve 'no cash': Don

WASHINGTON DC, 25 MAY

US President Donald Trump has said any future peace deal with Iran would involve "no cash" and would be fundamentally different from the Obama-era nuclear agreement. This comes as criticism mounted from both Republicans and Democrats over the emerging framework.

In a post on Truth Social, Trump said any deal he reached with Tehran would block Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, unlike the 2015 agreement negotiated under former President Barack Obama, which he claimed gave Iran "massive amounts of cash" and "a clear and open path" to a bomb. "Don't listen to the losers,"

Trump wrote, referring to critics of the negotiations.

Several senior Republicans expressed concern over the emerging framework. Senator Ted Cruz warned that allowing Iran to retain uranium enrichment capabilities or influence over the Strait of Hormuz would be "a disastrous mistake". Senator Roger Wicker said a proposed 60-day ceasefire could undermine gains made during Operation Epic Fury.

Former secretary of state Mike Pompeo also criticised the talks, claiming they resembled the Obama-era approach. White House Communications Director Steven Cheung dismissed Pompeo's remarks, saying he was uninformed about the negotiations.

Senator Lindsey Graham backed Trump but said any long-term deal should expand the Abraham Accords to include Saudi Arabia and other Muslim nations normalising ties with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had discussed reopening the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear programme with Trump. —*Agencies*

MOJTABA IN HIDING, USING COURIERS TO COMMUNICATE: REPORT

WASHINGTON DC, 25 MAY

Iran's Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, is living in secrecy at an undisclosed location with minimal outside contact, according to a CBS News report citing US intelligence officials. Communication with him is reportedly conducted only through trusted couriers, making it difficult even for senior Iranian officials authorised to engage with the Trump administration to coordinate internally.

The report said delays in negotiations stem partly from the time taken for messages and proposals from the US to reach Khamenei and for responses to return. Officials claimed that even top figures in Tehran are unaware of his whereabouts and cannot contact him directly.

US officials also said American and Israeli intelligence penetration within Iran enabled the targeting of several senior Iranian leaders during Operation Epic Fury. Khamenei was reportedly injured in US-Israeli strikes and has since adopted extreme security measures following the killing of his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei —*ANI*

Residential building caught fire after Russia's largest strike on Kyiv, Ukraine, on Sunday —*PTI*

Belarus under lens after Russian attack on Ukraine

KYIV, 25 MAY

Belarus' exiled opposition leader visited Kyiv on Monday as the Ukrainian capital cleaned up after Russia's biggest missile attack of the year, and world leaders kept a close eye on how much support the Belarusian government is ready to provide for Moscow's all-out invasion of Ukraine.

Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya arrived by train in Kyiv for her first visit to the city, a day after French President Emmanuel Macron spoke by phone with President Alexander Lukashenko, who has governed Belarus with an iron fist for more than three decades. The French leader "underscored the risks for Belarus of allowing itself to be dragged into Russia's war in Ukraine," according to a presidential aide in Macron's office who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Macron also spoke on Sunday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has warned that Belarus could provide a launchpad for Russia to open a new front in northern Ukraine. With the invasion more than four years old, the Russian army is locked in a hard and costly slog on the 1,250km front line that mostly snakes through eastern and southern Ukraine. With American-made air defence missiles in short supply because of the Iran war, Russian missiles are harder for Ukraine to stop.

US efforts to stop the fighting have made little progress and have now stalled. — *PTI*

BLA is taking up arms to fight against Pak: Expert

GHAZIABAD, 25 MAY

Defence expert TP Tyagi said the Jaffar Express incident proves that the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is no longer a small group.

He said that there is a wing of female suicide bombers in the BLA.

"This incident demonstrates that the Balochistan Liberation Army is no longer just a small group; it now includes a women's brigade. Within that, a wing of female suicide bombers has been formed. They are now prepared to fight Pakistan for their independence," he said.

Tyagi said that apart from the BLA, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Afghan Taliban and more groups are rising against the Pak government.

"The public is against General Munir's actions against Muslim unity. By joining Donald Trump's "Board of Peace," recognizing Israel, and deciding to work against the Palestinians and Hamas, he has alienated the people," he said.

Tyagi said that it was ridiculous for Pakistan to be playing mediator between the US and Iran. "While Pakistan is burning internally, it is attempting to mediate between America and Iran. This is ridiculous. I believe these are clear signs of an impending civil war in Pakistan," he said.

The BLA has claimed responsibility for the attack on a military shuttle train near Chaman Phatak, on the outskirts of Quetta Cantonment railway station, saying that 82 Pakistani soldiers were killed and over 121 others injured, says a report by The Balochistan Post. — *ANI*

Officials examine a crater at the site of bomb explosion, in Quetta —*PTI*

UGANDA REPORTS 7 EBOLA CASES

KAMPALA, 25 MAY

Ugandan health authorities on Monday reported two new Ebola cases, bringing the number of infections to seven.

All the cases are linked to the outbreak in Congo, which appears to have started several weeks before Congolese authorities declared it on 15 May.

A 59-year-old Congolese man was admitted to a hospital in Kampala on 11 May, and died three days later, before it was known he was suffering from Ebola. Two other Congolese nationals who sought medical care in Uganda later tested positive for Ebola.

Ugandan health authorities on Saturday confirmed the first local infections: a driver and a health worker exposed to the Congolese patient who died on 11 May. Two more health workers at a private hospital in Kampala have tested positive, the Ministry of Health said Monday. In Congo, suspected Ebola cases have topped 900. —*PTI*

Lithuania suspects foreign hand in 6L nationals' data leak

VILNIUS, 25 MAY

Lithuanian authorities are on high alert after a massive data leak involving around 6,00,000 entries from national data registers, which is believed to have been executed by another country.

The Lithuanian general prosecutor's office announced on Friday that the leak was primarily from the registers of real estate and legal entities accessed by using login credentials of institutions authorized to receive the data.

The head of the State Enterprise Centre of Registers, Adrijus Jusas, resigned Monday after the leak.

Lithuanians are especially cautious given that the country, with a population of 2.9 million, is one of the main targets of Russia's hybrid war against Europe, which includes sabotage, arson attacks and vandalism, as well as influence operations. — *PTI*

'WOUND IN CHRISTIAN MEMORY'

Pope makes historic apology in Vatican's role in slavery

VATICAN CITY, 25 MAY

Pope Leo XIV on Monday issued a historic apology for the Holy See's role in legitimising slavery, acknowledging that past popes authorised the subjugation and enslavement of non-Christians during the colonial era.

In his first encyclical, 'Magnifica Humanitas' ("Magnificent Humanity"), the first US-born pope described the Vatican's record on slavery as a "wound in Christian memory" and asked forgiveness "in the name of the Church" for centuries of suffering and humiliation inflicted on enslaved people.

The encyclical, focused largely on the risks posed by artificial intelligence and modern forms of exploitation, linked the trans-Atlantic slave trade to present-day "digital colonialism", including exploitative labour tied to mining rare minerals for AI technology.

Leo acknowledged that 15th-century papal decrees, including Dum Diversas issued by Pope Nicholas V in 1452, granted European rulers authority to conquer and enslave "infidels". These decrees later formed the basis of the Doctrine of Discovery — a legal and religious concept used by European powers to justify claiming lands in Africa and the Americas and subjugating Indigenous peoples.

While the Vatican repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery in 2023, it never formally revoked the papal bulls themselves.

Leo noted that the Church took centuries to explicitly condemn slavery despite affirming human dignity in principle.

The pope's own family history reportedly includes both enslaved people and slaveholders, according to genealogical research published in The New York Times. —*PTI*

Pope Leo noted that the Church took centuries to explicitly condemn slavery despite affirming human dignity in principle.

Gold rises to R1.59 lakh/10g on weak dollar

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Gold prices climbed by Rs 426 to Rs 1.59 lakh per 10 grams in futures trade on Monday, tracking gains in global markets amid optimism surrounding a possible peace agreement between the US and Iran, "aided by a weaker US dollar, lower Treasury yields and easing concerns over energy-driven inflation," said Manav Modi of Motilal Oswal Financial Services. The positive sentiment was further bolstered by easing crude oil prices. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold for June delivery rose Rs 426, or 0.27 per cent, to Rs 1,59,105 per 10 grams across 5,312 lots. In international markets, Comex gold futures for June gained nearly 1 per cent to USD 4,590.62 per ounce in New York. —*PTI*

Edelweiss invests $30M in Cyient Semiconductors

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Cyient Semiconductors on Monday said it has secured financing of USD 30 million (about Rs 286 crore) from funds managed by Edelweiss and affiliated co-investors to scale up its global semiconductor business. The transaction includes an equity investment of about USD 10 million (Rs 100 crore) at a post-money equity valuation of USD 500 million (Rs 4,600 crore), along with USD 20 million in structured debt designed to support long-duration growth, the company said in a regulatory filing. "This investment is for scaling capabilities in power semiconductors and custom silicon, areas where sustained R&D and IP translate into long-term competitive advantage across multiple product cycles," it said. —*PTI*

India's premium spending surges: Kotak report

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

A Kotak Mahindra Mutual Fund report highlights a shift in India's consumption pattern, driven by affluent households spending more on premium products and experiences. The report, titled "The Great Consumption Shift," reveals that the share of food expenditure has declined from 59 per cent to 46 per cent in rural areas and from 48 per cent to 39 per cent in urban India since 1999-2000. Meanwhile, categories like mobiles, automobiles, and rent have increased in wallet share. Premium smartphones above Rs 30,000 now account for 26 per cent of sales, up from 20 per cent, despite flat overall sales. The report notes that top-income urban households spend significantly more on jewellery, education, and durables, with urban wealthy growing at an 18 per cent CAGR versus 6 per cent for the broader population. —*ANI*

-PTI

GAIL FY26 net profit touches r6,968 cr

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

GAIL's profit after tax (PAT) stood at Rs 6,968 crore for FY 2025-26, as profitability moderated amid global headwinds. According to the company, standalone revenue from operations touched Rs 1,38,697 crore for the full fiscal year 2025-26, compared to Rs 1,37,288 crore recorded in the previous fiscal. However, standalone PAT fell by approximately 38 per cent from Rs 11,312 crore in the previous fiscal. The company's EBITA for the full year stood at Rs 13,119 crore, down from Rs 19,168 crore in the prior fiscal period, while Profit Before Tax (PBT) registered at Rs 8,964 crore against Rs 14,825 crore in the previous year. —*ANI*

FM flags '3F' challenges: Fuel, Fertiliser, Forex

Says India forced to use foreign currency to import essentials

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman addresses SIDBI's 37th Foundation Day in Mumbai on Monday -*PTI*

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday warned that India was facing mounting pressure from what she described as the "three Fs" — fuel, fertiliser and foreign exchange — as rising global commodity prices and the ongoing West Asia war strain the country's external finances.

Speaking at the 37th Foundation Day event of Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) in Mumbai, Sitharaman explained that India was being forced to spend large amounts of foreign currency on importing essential commodities such as crude oil, fertilisers and gold.

She said that these imports cannot be settled in Indian rupees and payments for these commodities must be made in dollars or other foreign currencies, thereby increasing pressure on India's forex reserves. She said fluctuating international crude prices, soaring fertiliser costs and rising gold prices had emerged as key external challenges for the Indian economy.

She linked the situation to the ongoing tensions in West Asia and disruptions caused by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. According to Sitharaman, the geopolitical crisis was already having direct business consequences, including higher fuel costs, delayed cargo movement, expensive shipping, supply shortages, pressure on working capital and uncertainty in export orders.

She said the government's approach would continue to focus on protecting citizens, supporting Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), safeguarding exporters and ensuring supply chains remain functional.

However, while flagging global headwinds, Sitharaman maintained that India's domestic economy remained resilient. "We must also recognise that India's domestic economic situation remains positive and resilient even today," she said, citing strong economic indicators across sectors.

She pointed to robust GST collections, rising vehicle sales and higher insurance activity as signs of sustained domestic demand. "Gross GST collections crossed Rs 22 lakh crore for the year 2025-26, rising 8.3 per cent," she said.

Addressing bankers and SIDBI, Sitharaman also called for customised financial products for small businesses, noting that MSMEs often operate on uneven income cycles and cannot be served through "standard products" —*Agencies*

UNDER $100 PER BARREL

Markets jump over 1% as crude oil price dips

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Monday, driven by a sharp correction in Brent crude oil prices, which tanked 5.52 per cent to USD 97.82 per barrel, and a rally in global markets amid improving sentiment surrounding the US-Iran negotiations.

BSE Sensex jumped 1,073.61 points, or 1.42 per cent, to settle at 76,488.96. During the day, it soared 1,143.72 points, or 1.51 per cent, to 76,559.07. While NSE Nifty surged 312.40 points, or 1.32 per cent, to end at 24,031.70.

Of the 30-Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, HDFC Bank, Eternal, Bajaj Finserv, and Kotak Mahindra Bank were among the biggest winners. In contrast, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Sun Pharma and Hindustan Unilever were the laggards.

"Markets gained momentum as crude prices corrected on hopes of a US-Iran deal. Sentiment improved amid reports of progress in reopening the Strait of Hormuz, though uncertainty persists," Vinod Nair at Geojit Investments said.

The US has made significant progress in negotiations with Iran to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, but US President Donald Trump is maintaining a cautious approach and will not accept a bad deal, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Monday.

In Asian markets, Japan and Shanghai ended higher. Markets were closed in South Korea and Hong Kong due to holidays. European markets were also trading higher. Similarly, US markets ended in positive territory on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors offloaded equities worth Rs 4,440.47 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

In the previous session on Friday, the Sensex climbed 231.99 points, or 0.31 per cent, to settle at 75,415.35. The Nifty edged higher by 64.60 points, or 0.27 per cent, to end at 23,719.30. —*PTI*

Sebi bans 7 in Rs 20 cr stock manipulation case

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Capital markets regulator Sebi has barred seven individuals from securities markets for allegedly running a coordinated pump-and-dump scheme across social media platforms and making unlawful gains of over Rs 20.25 crore.

SEBI has also directed finance influencer Hemant Gupta and his sons, Rohan Gupta and Aniket Gupta, to immediately cease from offering unregistered research analyst services.

In a 234-page interim order on 22 May, Sebi said that Hemant, Rohan and Aniket acted as "Operators" who first accumulated positions in thinly traded SME stocks and later circulated bullish stock recommendations on social media platforms to inflate prices, and sold their holdings.

Four other family members, Sharon, Leana, Rajani and Purvangi Gupta, allegedly facilitated the operation by allowing the use of their trading accounts, the order said.

"The investigation highlighted the scheme of the respondents who by posting recommendations on various scrips on their X other and social media platforms induced the public to deal in securities purely based on misleading and unsolicited stock tips, thus enabling the beneficiaries to liquidate their holdings at an inflated price," Sebi member Kamlesh C Varshney said. —*PTI*

CLOSES AT 95.25

Rupee up 35P; RBI can curb volatility, says Guv

MUMBAI, 25 MAY

-REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

- The rupee rose 35 paise to close at 95.25 on Monday as optimism grew over a potential US-Iran peace deal, including regarding the Strait of Hormuz blockade.

The rupee rose 35 paise to close at 95.25 on Monday as optimism grew over a potential US-Iran peace deal, including regarding the Strait of Hormuz blockade.

Forex traders said the rupee registered its third straight session of gain after RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the central bank will do "whatever is required" to ensure orderly price discovery in the forex market. The Rupee is neither overvalued nor undervalued after its recent depreciation, Malhotra told Mint.

Speaking against the backdrop of concerns about the rupee approaching the psychologically significant 100-per-dollar mark, Malhotra said the RBI had sufficient tools and reserves to address excessive volatility.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.36, then touched an intraday high of 95.12 and a low of 95.44 during the trade. At the end of Monday's trading session, the rupee was quoted at 95.25, higher by 35 paise from its previous close. On Friday, the rupee rose 75 paise to close at 95.60. Meanwhile, the dollar was trading at 99.98, down 0.26 per cent.

Traders said the rupee strengthened after US President Donald Trump said the US and Iran had "largely negotiated" a peace deal, while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said India and the US were close to an interim trade agreement.

Meanwhile, the country's forex reserves dropped USD 8.094 billion to USD 688.894 billion during the week ended 15 May, the RBI said on Friday. In the preceding week ending 8 May, the overall reserves jumped by USD 6.3 billion to USD 697 billion. —*Agencies*

Asia emits 90% of all greenhouse gas from rice fields: Study

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

-PEXELS

- Researchers from Boston College said practical farm-level changes could cut methane emissions and support global climate targets without reducing food production.

Asia accounted for more than 90 per cent of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions from rice fields during 2001-2020, with Southeast Asia contributing the largest share, according to a study published in the journal Nature Food.

The study found that greenhouse gas emissions from paddy fields have doubled since the 1960s to the equivalent of 1.1 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually.

Researchers led a team from Boston College, US, said practical farm changes could cut methane emissions and support global climate targets without reducing food production.

"Our goal was to understand the full climate impact of rice systems, not just methane, but all major greenhouse gases together, and to identify realistic pathways for mitigation," lead author Hanqin Tian, professor of earth and environmental sciences, Boston College, said.

While rice feeds more than half of the world's population, it has a growing climate footprint with flooded paddy fields emitting methane and nitrous oxide, two powerful greenhouse gases. The researchers combined a machine learning algorithm trained on more than 21,000 field observations, a process-based ecosystem model, and a global meta-analysis. —*PTI*

NTPC begins nuclear project site selection in four states

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

-PTI

State-owned NTPC has commenced site selection studies in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Madhya Pradesh for nuclear projects, as part of its long-term 30 GW nuclear energy plan. The move aligns with the government's target of reaching 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047.

In a post-earnings presentation, NTPC stated it aimed to establish 30 GW of nuclear capacity across at least 14 states, with investments running into lakhs of crores. The company has already identified potential sites in multiple states, with studies underway in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Odisha.

An expert highlighted that setting up projects in coastal states would be advantageous, as continuous water supply is a key for nuclear plants.

Earlier, sources indicated NTPC would soon submit its first feasibility study to the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) for approval, with further studies in two more states in progress.

Currently, NTPC is developing a 4x700 MW nuclear project in Rajasthan, in a 49:51 joint venture with Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL), at an estimated investment of Rs 42,000 crore. Additionally, in FY25, NTPC established a wholly-owned subsidiary, NTPC Parmanu Urja Nigam Limited (NPUNL), focusing on advanced nuclear technologies.

Founded in 1975 as a thermal power generator, NTPC has diversified into new energy sources. According to its website, the company's current installed capacity at group level stands at 90,667.8MW, spanning coal, gas, hydro, and solar power. —*PTI*

AMID US SANCTIONS

Huawei's new chip tech could disrupt Nvidia

SHANGHAI, 25 MAY

Chinese tech giant Huawei has unveiled a new manufacturing approach that could allow it to produce high-end chips rivalling those of competitors.

Huawei's Kirin chips, scheduled for launch later this year, will use a proprietary "LogicFolding" architecture, with the company claiming the technology could deliver capabilities equivalent to a 1.4-nanometre process by 2031.

Huawei claims the new chips are based on the Tau Scaling Law and could achieve transistor densities equivalent to 1.4 nanometres — matching what rivals such as TSMC, Intel, and Samsung can make.

The move could make it difficult for Nvidia to make a comeback in the Chinese market. Last week, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang told CNBC the US chipmaker had "conceded" the Chinese market to Huawei.

Huawei's "chip queen" **He Tingbo** introduced the Tau Scaling Law at the 2026 IEEE International Symposium on Circuits and Systems on Monday, addressing the physical limits that traditional transistors have begun facing, diminishing economic returns and technical bottlenecks.

Taiwan's TSMC, the world's largest and most advanced semiconductor foundry, currently uses technology capable of producing 2nm chips and plans to introduce 1.4nm technology within a few years.

Intel and Samsung are also working towards mass-producing 1.4nm chips in the next couple of years.

Huawei's success in this new frontier could mark a significant shift in US-China dynamics, boosting its independence and cementing its standing as a player in cutting-edge technology.

The US imposed sanctions on Beijing, restricting access to high-end lithography tools and other technologies needed to manufacture next-generation chips. —*Agencies*

Paytm to invest $9M in European subsidiary

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Fintech company One 97 Communications, which operates under the Paytm brand, announced that its wholly-owned subsidiary Paytm Cloud Technologies will invest USD 9 million in its European payment arm.

The company's filing states, "The Board of Directors of PCTL (Paytm Cloud Technologies Limited) has approved an additional investment by way of subscription to 9 million equity shares of EUR 1 each at a total consideration of EUR 9 million, in its wholly-owned subsidiary, Paytm Europe Payments SA (Paytm Europe)."

The move aims to increase Paytm Europe's paid-up capital to support its business funding needs.

The transaction is expected to complete on or before 30 June, 2026. Paytm Europe Payments SA, incorporated in Luxembourg on 12 January, 2026, is a step-down subsidiary of One 97 Communications and has yet to commence operations. PCTL currently holds 100 per cent of its EUR 1 million paid-up share capital. The filing added, "Following the investment, there will be no change in the shareholding pattern." —*PTI*

-PTI

Gukesh calls criticism 'fair' ahead of Norway Chess

OSLO, 25 MAY

Reigning world champion D Gukesh is not ruffled by the barrage of criticism that has come his way in the past 18 months, as the young Indian Grandmaster believes all of it is justified given his underwhelming form.

Gukesh, who will turn 20 on 29 May, is here to compete in the Norway Chess Tournament and opens his campaign against Germany's Vincent Keymer on Monday. He would be eager to turn things around and log some strong results in the lead-up to his world title defence against challenger Javokhir Sindarov later this year.

"Most of it (critical comments made by former greats) I don't see, but there are some that I have heard, and I think it's fair," said Gukesh on Sunday. "I have not been performing well in the last one-and-a-half years, and I think I would say that my performances have been way below expectations.—*PTI*

ISSF WC: Samrat Rana and Arjun Babuta in focus

MUNICH, 25 MAY

The ISSF World Cup Munich will see two finals on the opening day on Tuesday, in the men's 10m air pistol and 10m air rifle events. World Champion Samrat Rana will lead the Indian challenge in the 10m air pistol event along with Sharvan Kumar and debutant Ajendra Singh Chauhan.The Indian challenge will be spearheaded by Olympian Arjun Babuta, who started the season with a gold at the Asian Championships, which are in focus. Traditionally billed as a blue-riband annual event in the sport,the Olympiaschieß anlage will see the participation of 696 athletes from 80 countries, including a galaxy of Olympic and World Champions. The 22-member Indian squad has a healthy mix of experience and youth. —*PTI*

Nepal beats Bhutan in SAFF Women's opener

MARGAO, 25 MAY

Nepal opened its SAFF Women's Championship 2026 campaign with a narrow 1-0 win over Bhutan on Monday at the Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Margao, Goa. It was Dorji Edon's 23rd minute-own goal which proved to be the difference between the sides from Group A. Both teams next face Sri Lanka in the tournament, which has India, Bangladesh, and the Maldives placed in the other group. Host India is taking on the Maldives later in the day.—*PTI*

-PTI

Ravi Dahiya, Sharad knock on CAT doors

NEW DELHI, 25 MAY

Tokyo Olympics silver medallist wrestler Ravi Kumar Dahiya and Paralympic high jumper Sharad Kumar have approached the Central Administrative Tribunal seeking regularisation of their services as Assistant Directors of Education (Sports) with the Delhi government, alleging that they have been kept on repeated ad hoc extensions despite discharging regular administrative duties for years.

In separate but similarly worded petitions, the two athletes argued that they had left secure government jobs to join the Government of NCT of Delhi after being offered Group 'A' positions in recognition of their international achievements and with an expectation of eventual regularisation.—*PTI*

RCB's batting depth vs GT's relentless bowling machine

Both teams ended the league stage on 18 points after 14 matches

DHARAMSHALA, 25 MAY

QUALIFIER 1

Gujarat Titans will take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru at Dharamshala -*PTI*

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's pursuit of back-to-back Indian Premier League (IPL) titles will run into the season's most disciplined bowling attack when they face Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 1 here on Tuesday, with a direct place in the final at stake.

Both teams ended the league stage on 18 points after 14 matches, but RCB claimed the top spot owing to a superior net run rate.

The middle-overs duel between Rashid Khan and RCB's right-heavy batting unit could also prove decisive, although skipper Patidar's strong game against spin gives Bengaluru an important counter-option.

With both sides evenly matched on points and packed with match-winners, Tuesday's Qualifier 1 shapes up as a battle between RCB's batting depth and GT's relentless bowling machine.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Gujarat Titans have arguably been the two most complete sides of IPL 2026, though they have taken contrasting routes to the playoffs. RCB, under skipper Rajat Patidar, built their campaign around aggressive batting and a far more reliable bowling unit than in previous seasons.

GT VS RCB @ HP Cricket Association Stadium, Dharamshala
7.30 pm IST

The defending champions repeatedly crossed 200 this season and benefited immensely from the experience of the iconic Virat Kohli at the top and the pace duo of Josh Hazlewood and Bhuvneshwar Kumar with the ball. RCB also carry the advantage of recent familiarity with conditions in Dharamsala, where they sealed a crucial win against Punjab Kings earlier this month. GT, meanwhile, have surged into the playoffs on the back of a formidable bowling attack and a top order that rarely allowed pressure to build. Captain Shubman Gill, the elegant Sai Sudharsan and explosive wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler have provided solidity and firepower in equal measure.

HEAD TO HEAD
GT and RCB is perfectly tied at 4-4 across their 8 matches in Indian Premier League history. They faced each other twice in the league stage, with both teams trading victories

But it is GT's bowling that has stood out in the second half of the season. The pace trio of Mohammed Siraj, Kagiso Rabada and Prasidh Krishna has consistently struck with the new ball, while Rashid Khan and left-arm spinner R Sai Kishore have controlled the middle overs expertly. —*PTI*

'Paid the price': DC bow out of IPL 2026: Hemang Badani

Delhi Capitals head coach Hemang Badani admitted that his side failed to produce consistent performances through the season and paid the price for not capitalising on key moments in crucial matches. DC ended their 2026 IPL campaign in sixth place with seven wins and as many defeats, falling short of the playoffs for the fifth year in a row. There were several matches where DC came close to winning but failed to cross the line. They suffered a heartbreaking one-run defeat against the Gujarat Titans at home and were also unable to defend a massive total of 264 against the Punjab Kings. To add to their woes, there were dropped catches galore, which proved to be decisive in their losses against the Chennai Super Kings and the Sunrisers Hyderabad. "There were many games that I genuinely felt could go either way. And we did not seize those moments," Badani said at the post-match press conference on Sunday. One being the Gujarat game, we lost the game by one run. The 264 is again something that you would fancy yourself to defend that score. Even with CSK, we dropped some catches.

SOUDAL OPEN

Indian golfer Yuvraj Sandhu endured a difficult final day to finish T-63 at the Soudal Open -*PTI*

Sandhu finishes T-63, Sterne wins after a gap of 13 years

BELGIUM, 25 MAY

Indian golfer Yuvraj Sandhu endured a difficult final day to finish T-63 at the Soudal Open here.

The 29-year-old is playing his debut season on the DP World Tour. Sandhu carded his only over-par round of 73 on the final day and finished with a score of 5-under par with rounds of 70-68-68-73.

The winner this week was South Africa's Richard Sterne, a seven-time winner on the DP World Tour who won his last title over 13 years ago.Sterne had a total score of 18-under par (64-68-68-66). The other Indian in the field this week was Shubhankar Sharma, who missed the cut for the third successive start. He last made the cut at the Turkish Airlines Open back in March.

Sandhu struggled in his final round of the week as he saw a pair of bogeys on the fifth and sixth holes and another on the 13th hole before making his only birdie of the day on the 15th. This saw him card a final round of 2-over 73 to drop down more than 30 places from T-32 to T-63. Sandhu's second and third day performances had set the Indian up for a strong finish, but he failed to keep up the momentum.

Sterne put together a strong final round of 5-under 66 with four birdies, one eagle and one bogey to clinch the title. The 45-year-old was aided by a late birdie on the 16th hole and an eagle on the 17th to put himself into the lead with only one hole left to play.

Saptak Talwar finishes T-40 in Denmark, as Pulkkanen wins title

Indian golfer Saptak Talwar followed up two indifferent rounds in the middle with a strong final round to finish at T-40 at the Danish Golf Challenge.

He carded 4-under 68 to take his total score for the week to 8-under par (67-70-75-68). Talwar, who finished second at the DP World PGTI Open, an event co-sanctioned between the PGTI Tour and the DP World Tour, is now 21st on the Road to Mallorca Standings.Tapio Pulkkanen beat Maxence Giboudot in a play-off to win the title after both players finished at 18-under par to go into a sudden-death play-off for the title.

Pulkkanen won the play-off to claim his second HotelPlanner Tour title. —*PTI*

Basavareddy stuns 7th seed Fritz

PARIS, 25 MAY

Indian-origin tennis player Nishesh Basavareddy caused the first major upset of the French Open as he stunned seventh-seeded American Taylor Fritz in the opening round here.

Wild card entrant Basavareddy, an American citizen now, beat world number nine Fritz 7-6(5), 7-6(5), 6-7(9), 6-1 in a gruelling match that lasted two hours and 45 minutes on Sunday to reach the second round.

The 21-year-old, whose parents moved to the USA from Nellore in Andhra Pradesh in 1999, became the first American man to beat a top-10 opponent at Roland Garros since Jan-Michael Gambill eliminated then-World No. 8 Nicolas Kiefer in 2000.He was aggressive early, using plenty of drop shots and his backhand down the line. He also withstood 71 winners from Fritz, hitting 51 of his own to claim the first Top-10 victory of his career. Basavareddy had played just five tour-level matches this season when he walked on court against Fritz.

Novak Djokovic overcomes a slow start

At age 39, Novak Djokovic can still wear opponents down.

Even opponents nearly half his age — and in front of a hostile crowd.

Djokovic came back from a set down for a 5-7, 7-5, 6-1, 6-4 victory over 22-year-old home player Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard in the first round of the French Open on Sunday in his record 82nd Grand Slam appearance.

"Obviously, playing a French player, centre court at Roland Garros, is never so easy. The crowd gets into it, and then you feel the pressure even more," Djokovic said after the 2-hour, 51-minute encounter. "But all in all, it was a good match to be part of: Three hours, just what the doctor ordered at age 39." Grunting during long rallies and digging deep on the opening night session on Court Philippe-Chatrier, it wasn't until 1 hour, 45 minutes in that Djokovic finally found a way to break his 6-foot-7 (2.01-meter) opponent and even the match at a set all.

Four-time champ Iga Swiatek is not taking anything for granted

It was a massive mismatch on paper, and that's the way it ended up on court, too.

Four-time champion Iga Swiatek required exactly one hour to eliminate 136th-ranked French Open debutante Emerson Jones 6-1, 6-2 in the first round on Monday, in front of a mostly empty Court Philippe-Chatrier on another steamy day in Paris.

The only real issue for the third-ranked Swiatek came when she needed a trainer to re-tape the middle finger on her tennis-playing right hand for an apparent blister after the first set. "I'm just really happy to play on this court," she said. —*PTI*

SINGAPORE OPEN

Lakshya, Sindhu lead Indian challenge

SINGAPORE, 25 MAY

India's top shuttlers Lakshya Sen and PV Sindhu will look to regain consistency and end their title drought when they spearhead the country's challenge at the USD 1,000,000 Singapore Open Super 750 tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

Reigning Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya, who won the Australia Open last November, will hope to bounce back from last week's first-round exit and make a deep run when he opens his campaign against China's Lu Guang Zu. He had come close to winning a title at the All England Championships before finishing runner-up.

In women's singles, two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu, who reached the quarterfinals at the Thailand Open, will begin her campaign against Indonesia's fifth seed Putri Kusuma Wardani. The Indian has faced significant challenges maintaining her elite form following injuries in 2025, leading to a period of inconsistency and early exits in various BWF World Tour events.

Young Indian shuttler Ayush Shetty, who finished runner-up at the Asian Championships and played a key role in India's bronze medal-winning Thomas Cup campaign, will take on Canada's Victor Lai, last year's World Championships bronze medallist.

The focus will also be on India's two experienced campaigners, Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy, both 33, as they seek to rediscover consistency. —*PTI*

Indian women's hockey team ready for Australia challenge

PERTH, 25 MAY

The Indian women's hockey team would look to kickstart its preparations for the FIH Nations Cup on a positive note when it takes on Australia in the four-match series starting here on Tuesday.

The Salima Tete-led side will aim to build vital momentum ahead of the crucial FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup to be held in Auckland from June 15 to 21.

Fresh from an encouraging display in Argentina earlier this year, where India drew the four-match series 2-2 against the world No. 2 side after losing the first two matches, the visiting team enters this tour with confidence.

The squad spent the last few weeks grinding through high-intensity tactical drills at the national training camp in SAI Bengaluru, which helped the players sharpen their skills, structural play, penalty corner variations and overall match fitness under the watchful eyes of chief coach Sjoerd Marijne.

India captain Salima said the players are upbeat about the tour. —*PTI*

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

Uzbekistan announces 30-member squad

TASHKENT, 25 MAY

Uzbekistan have officially announced their 30-member squad for the upcoming FIFA World Cup, marking a historic moment as the nation prepares for its first-ever appearance on football's biggest stage after nearly three decades of qualification attempts.

Head coach Fabio Cannavaro finalised the squad following a three-week training camp in Tashkent, trimming the preliminary 40-man list down to 30 players ahead of the tournament. Placed in Group K, Uzbekistan will open their World Cup journey against Colombia on 17 June before facing Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal on 23 June. Their final group-stage match will be against DR Congo on 27 June.

Dark clouds hang over Son's likely World Cup farewell

Son Heung-min and South Korea head to North America with a sense of foreboding threatening to envelop them, for what will surely be their talisman's last World Cup. The 33-year-old skipper has faced growing questions about his faltering form and international future, while coach Hong Myung-bo is deeply unpopular with fans. Pre-World Cup friendlies only added to the sense of disgruntlement, thrashed 4-0 by the Ivory Coast and beaten 1-0 by Austria. Afterwards, Hong was moved to defend Son, who left Premier League Tottenham last year for Los Angeles FC in the MLS, with his best days seemingly behind him.

Ancelotti to end long wait for WC glory

Brazil's biggest hope to end a 24-year World Cup title drought is not a clinical striker, a creative midfielder or a dribbling winger like in previous editions of the tournament. This time, Brazilians are pinning their hopes on a 66-year-old Italian, who will be sitting on the bench. Carlo Ancelotti, one of the most successful coaches of his generation, left Real Madrid to take over Brazil's national team last year, a rare example of a foreign coach in charge of the Seleção. Even though his results have been mixed five wins, three losses. —*PTI*

HISTORIC ESTADIO AZTECA TO STAGE OPENING MATCH OF 2026 WORLD CUP

JAKARTA, 25 MAY

Estadio Azteca, located in the Coyoacán district of Santa Úrsula Coapa in Mexico City, will host the opening match of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be jointly staged by the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

One of Mexico's most iconic sporting landmarks will officially open the tournament with the Group A match between hosts Mexico and South Africa on June 12 at 02:00 AM WIB (Western Indonesia Time).

It will mark the third time Estadio Azteca has hosted a World Cup opening match after the 1970 and 1986 editions, won respectively by Brazil and Argentina.

In both previous tournaments, the stadium also staged the final matches, becoming the backdrop to some of football's most historic moments. In 1970, Pelé lifted his third World Cup trophy after Brazil defeated Italy 4-1 in the final, with Pelé scoring one goal.

Sixteen years later, Diego Maradona captained Argentina to a 3-2 victory over West Germany in the 1986 final. —*PTI*